DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 341 142 EA 023 621

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TITLE Decision Making and School Improvement. LSCs in the First Two Years of Reform.
INSTITUTION Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance, IL.
PUB DATE Dec 91
NOTE 58p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Evaluation; *Administrator Selection; *Decision Making; Educational Change; Elementary Secondary Education; *Instructional Improvement; *Meetings; Parent Participation; Program Evaluation; *School Based Management
IDENTIFIERS *Chicago Public Schools IL; *Local School Councils

ABSTRACT

Arising from the first 2 years of a 5-year project studying Chicago school reform, this report analyzes local school council meetings, principal evaluation and selection, and school improvement plans in 14 sample schools. Findings are based on observing 177 council meetings during 1990-91, interviewing principals and Professional Personnel Advisory Committee chairpersons, and reviewing the schools' improvement plans. The first section describes the workings of the 14 councils. As a group, the parent and community members comprising the councils were relatively well educated, had significant prior experience as school or community volunteers, and participated regularly. The local school councils considered about 10 different topics at each meeting, focusing on administrative and budgetary concerns. The second section, devoted to the principal evaluation and selection process, examines three cases: a council that retained its incumbent principal, a council that hired a new principal, and a third council that did not rehire its incumbent principal and was unable to hire a new one. The third section, devoted to analyzing school improvement plans, describes teacher participation in developing plans and the extent that the plans promote instructional change. (MLH)

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MONITORING AND RESEARCHING THE EFFECTS OF SCHOOL REFORM IN CHICAGO

Decision Making and School Improvement

LSCs in the First Two Years of Reform

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December 1991

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Major funding for the Monitoring and Research Project is provided by

The Chicago Community Trust
The Field Foundation of Illinois
The Lloyd A. Fry Foundation
The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
The Spencer Foundation
The Woods Charitable Fund

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Monitoring and Research staff of the Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance is greatly indebted to the local school councils, principals and faculty of the schools that have accommodated our research project for the past two years. In particular, we would like to thank the LSCs for welcoming us at meetings and completing surveys. We also appreciate the willingness of principals, faculty and LSC chairpersons to participate in interviews. We have enjoyed the opportunity to watch these councils evolve and are deeply grateful for their cooperation.

This report is the result of the first two years of a five-year project studying school reform in Chicago and is the product of many individuals' efforts. John Easton supervised the project and wrote portions of the first section on local school council meetings. Susan Flinspach wrote the portion of the first section that deals with topic contents of LSC meetings. Jesse Qualls analyzed local school council stability and vacancy for this section. Sandra Storey and Jesse Qualls analyzed the data on meeting attendance, participation and topic discussions. Paula Gill assisted with the data analysis and writing. Darryl Ford wrote the second section on principal evaluation and selection in the fourteen schools using his own observational notes and the notes provided by the other observers. Susan Ryan and Susan Flinspach wrote the third section on implementation of School Improvement Plan initiatives and instructional change in our 14 schools. Susan Ryan did the primary analysis of School Improvement Plans, faculty interviews and other data used in this section. Jesse Qualls, Darryl Ford, Susan Ryan, John Easton and Sandra Storey observed the meetings that are covered in this report. Susan Flinspach revised the coding scheme for the LSC meeting discussion. With help from Todd Ricard, she identified and coded each topic. The observers then went through and verified the coding of their schools discussions. The cooperative nature of this report, from the conceptualization to the final editing, has made it truly collaborative.

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SUMMARY

This report analyzes local school council (LSC) meetings, principal evaluation and selection, and school improvement plans (SIPs) in 14 sample schools. Our information comes from observing council meetings (177 in school year 1990-91), interviewing principals and Professional Personnel Advisory Committee (PPAC) chairpersons, and reviewing school improvement plans in these 14 schools.

Local School Councils and Their Meetings

On average, the councils in our study conducted 13 or 14 meetings last year, with some having many more meetings and others fewer. The average meeting lasted for about one and three-quarters hours and had an audience of about 10 adults and 2 or 3 children.

Taken as a group, the parent and community members of the councils were relatively well educated and had significant prior experience as volunteers in their schools and communities. On average, elementary parents had one year of college and five years volunteer experience in their schools. High school parents and elementary and high school community representatives had more education--on average, three or more years of college. These members had volunteered in their schools for about three years before being elected to their council. Concerns that council members would have little prior experience appear to be unfounded.

Stability of membership and attendance at meetings

These two factors are important for councils to govern effectively. About 73 percent of the original members of the 14 councils remained at the end of June 1991. One school had all of its members remain, whereas another had only five of its original members. Average attendance of council members at meetings was about 69 percent--equivalent to about 7 or 8 members present out of the total of 11 possible (not counting the high school student). Councils with greater stability tended to have better attendance. Councils with more member turnover and lower attendance had to devote significant amounts of their time to discussing these two problems, leaving them with less time (and fewer people) to discuss more important business.

Content of Local School Council Meetings

LSCs listen to, consider and discuss a wide range of business at their meetings. On the average, councils considered about 10 different topics at each meeting last year. The greatest number of these topics dealt with administrative concerns of running the LSCs themselves. These topics include discussions of low attendance and turnover of members. School program topics were the next most frequent area of topics and included school administration, curriculum and instruction, school improvement planning, and overcrowding issues. Finance issues, including the school budget and fundraising were next most frequent.

Percent of LSC Topics by Area	
Topic Area	% of all discussion
LSC Topics	31.8%
School Program	26.8%
Finance	12.8%
Personnel	9.1%
Building & Security	9.0%
Parent Involvement	5.8%
Other	4.7%

These were followed by personnel, building/ safety/discipline, parent involvement, and other issues.

Participation in Council Meetings

On the average, about 3.3 council members participated in the presentation or discussion of each topic that came up before the council. Some topics, including the school improvement plan and overcrowding, generated more participation, and other topics, including district council reports, generated less participation among members.

Principals participated most often in LSC discussions--in about 7 out of every 10 topics and in some councils as often as in 9 out of 10 topics. Chairpersons participated less often than principals, but they were more likely to participate in councils where principals participated less. Teacher members generally participated in about one-third of the topics discussed.

Other council members had much lower participation rates. Parents (not counting the chairperson) participated in fewer than 20 percent of all topics discussed and community members participated in about 25 percent. The amount of parent and community member participation differed greatly from one council to another--more so than principal, chairperson, and teacher participation.

Principal Evaluation and Selection

This section of the report looks at how the local school councils in our representative schools conducted principal evaluation and selection and then focuses on how three schools from our sample dealt with these duties.

During the 1989-90 school year, 9 of the 14 councils in our study reviewed their principal's contracts. These councils decided to award contracts to 8 of the 9 principals; of the 8 principals retained, 6 were incumbents and 2 were interims. One other interim principal in our sample did not receive a new contract that year. During the 1990-91 school year, the five remaining principals in our study had their contracts reviewed. LSCs offered new contracts to 3 principals; 2 councils decided not to award new contracts to their principals. All the principals considered this year were incumbents.

When we looked more closely at the principal evaluation and selection process of three LSCs, we found that these councils differed in how they undertook these jobs. For example, the first LSC spoke at length about how it would undertake the principal evaluation at its council meetings. It decided to base the evaluation on the results of a parent survey, a teacher survey, reports prepared about the school's programs, and

interviews held with the principal. In addition, this LSC held a public forum to get the input of the community. Using this information, this LSC decided to retain its principal.

At a second school, the LSC spoke about the need to complete the principal evaluation process at its council meetings, but seldom spoke about the specific criteria they would use to evaluate the principal. Also, this council seemed to have encountered some difficulty when the tasks of principal evaluation and principal selection became entangled. This LSC advertised the principalship as being vacant prior to the council having completed the formal evaluation of the incumbent principal. This gave the impression that the LSC was shopping for a new principal and caused upheaval in the school community. With the help of the district superintendent, this LSC was able to rectify its mistake, completed its formal evaluation process of the incumbent principal, and later selected a new educational leader for the school.

The LSC in the third school completed the evaluation process of the incumbent principal and decided to look for additional candidates. Although the incumbent principal was invited to apply, he was not selected as a finalist. After screening applications, narrowing the field, and holding a candidates' forum, this LSC attempted to select a new principal. None of the three final candidates, however, received the required seven votes to be selected as principal. After several voting attempts, this LSC decided to submit these three names to the district superintendent who subsequently selected the new school leader.

Closely examining the principal evaluation and selection processes for these three LSCs identified several issues that councils may want to consider when performing these duties. First, the issue of "lame-duck" leadership arose at the two schools where the incumbent principals did not receive new contracts. In one school, the incumbent took extended leave, so that the school had no principal to work on the school improvement plan and budget. At the second school, the principal attended only a few LSC meetings after his contract was not renewed. These situations raise the question of how effective a principal can be once his or her contract is not renewed. A second issue that became apparent is how an LSC's attention can be dominated by a single issue, like principal evaluation and selection, while other important issues are neglected. If principal evaluation and selection activities dominate the council's attention to the exclusion of completing other duties, new ways to help LSCs balance these duties need to be found. Councils may want to consider these issues and develop ways to deal with them as they conduct principal evaluation and selection in the future.

School Improvement Plan Implementation and Instructional Change

This final section of the report analyzes the contents of school improvement plans in our 14 sample schools and traces the implementation of many of the programs and initiatives described in the plans. We collected information about the implementation of the plans by interviewing principals and PPAC chairpersons.

Teachers and SIP Development

Principals had the primary responsibility for developing the SIP which the LSC then approved. Because this process does not specifically include teachers, many had feared that their views would not be included. According to PPAC chairpersons, this was not the case. The following quote illustrates many similar comments from teachers: "Last year, they (the LSC) took our document and just about adopted the whole thing as the SIP."

Implementation of SIP Initiatives

We classified the diverse initiatives in the 14 plans into four categories: **pedagogical** (dealing with teaching); **curricular** (pertaining to subject matter content); **organizational** (specifying some reorganization of classes, grades, or the entire school); or **other** (such as parent and community involvement).

Pedagogical initiatives speak to the teacher's "teaching"; they tend to place emphasis on <u>how</u> something is taught. Some examples of pedagogical initiatives are whole language programs in language arts, cooperative learning, team teaching, and writing across the curriculum. Upon implementation, pedagogical initiatives should result in changes in the teachers' classroom practices.

The 14 focus schools contain relatively few pedagogical initiatives. The principals and teachers describe the implementation of new ways of teaching as a lengthy and, at times, difficult process. Teachers must believe, and convince their colleagues, that changing their current practices is worth the necessary commitment of time and effort. They have to participate in staff development programs and then incorporate the new strategies into their teaching. They must mutually support each other's continuing experimentation with the new strategies, while adapting them to meet school policies, requirements, and the needs of their students. Principals and PPAC chairs at our sample of schools discuss the implementation of a pedagogical initiative as an on-going endeavor.

Curricular initiatives deal with changes in <u>what</u> is taught. Adopting new textbooks, adding an art class to the schedule, or setting up a new science lab are examples of curricular initiatives from the fourteen schools. Some curricular initiatives affect instruction as well as the curriculum. Curricular initiatives make up the largest category of initiatives in the fourteen plans.

Some curricular initiatives--implementing new literature-based reading and language arts programs at two schools and adding an Afro-centric component to certain classes at a third school--require a commitment of teachers' time and effort. The pattern of implementation is incremental; it proceeds from conceptualization to the classrooms via staff development, a great deal of teacher planning, and instructional trial and error. In this respect, the implementation of these sorts of curricular initiatives closely resembles that of the pedagogical initiatives, and contrasts sharply with the implementation of other curricular initiatives, like computer labs, which fall largely into place with sufficient funding and new

staff. Other curricular initiatives that follow the second pattern of implementation include science labs, full-day kindergartens, and pre-kindergarten classes. In addition, some elementary schools have recently expanded their curricular programs with art and music classes that have also been readily implemented through extra funding and the hiring of specialists.

The SIPs contain few unique **Organizational initiatives**, although many schools include them. They call for the restructuring of the school's physical, social, and instructional spaces. Organizational initiatives implemented before or after the school day are usually add-on programs; they have very little chance of directly affecting the average classroom teacher. For instance, after-school tutoring where students receive individualized or small-group instruction is an add-on initiative that may improve student performance. In contrast, organizational initiatives implemented during the school day usually do affect classroom teachers and, when completely implemented, they may even facilitate instructional improvements. The most common organizational initiative in the fourteen SIPs is to reduce class size by allotting teachers, students, and classrooms in new ways.

The **other initiatives** category has several major components: parent and community involvement; counseling and discipline; and attendance. Some examples of other initiatives include a program to train parents to assist in the classroom, an "adopt-a-student" program in which core staff "adopt" or pay special attention to students from a designated class for a month, and the building of partnerships between the school and outside agencies like a local business or museum. These initiatives are plans for add-on school programs that do not affect the regular classroom teacher.

Relationship between implementation patterns and types of SIP initiatives

	Pattern 1: Require significant commitment and time	Pattern 2: Require $ and new staff, but not widespread commitment
Initiatives likely to lead to instructional change	writing across curriculum team teaching whole language approach cooperative learning	none
Add-on programs	student conflict resolution some parent involvement	full-day kindergarten after-school tutoring pre-school programs computer labs attendance improvement

We have found two patterns of SIP implementation: 1) some initiatives require significant commitment of time and effort to be implemented successfully; and 2) other initiatives depend mostly on funding and new staff. Initiatives that require the participation of faculty, administrators, parents, and/or students take longer to implement and are constantly at risk from "non-believers" among the staff, from disillusionment, and from the possibility of ebbing commitment on the part of those already involved. Initiatives that basically require funding and staffing tend to be implemented quickly, and they are easily sustained by continued funding. Initiatives that affect the regular classroom teacher follow the first pattern of implementation, whereas most add-on programs adhere to the second.

Because of the commitment required, however, add-on programs such as increasing parent and community involvement also tend to follow the first pattern.

Instructional changes in general are not easily implemented because of the time commitment required from teachers. The process of implementation from initiatives to actual changes in classrooms often takes more than a year. One principal noted that her faculty is now into its fourth year of working with a university to develop, carry out, and refine a whole language program. In fact, the SIP is a three-year plan, and some schools have approached change methodically over a two- to three-year period. A three-year schedule for implementation of an initiative provides sufficient time for teachers to meet and discuss student needs, plan for program changes, garner staff support, select and purchase materials and equipment, pilot the program if necessary, and implement and adapt it to each classroom. Consequently, the implementation of initiatives that have an impact on instruction is on-going in our focus schools. The prolonged implementation requirements for significant instructional change constrain any rapid change in student achievement.

Not only does the process of bringing about instructional change take time, it also requires dedication and work. PPAC chairs note that a substantial majority of teachers at a school must adopt a new philosophy or approach in order for it to translate into tangible changes at the classroom level. Research in the field tends to confirm this notion. Committed teachers attend staff development programs and then alter their practices; others do not. Short-term workshops are usually insufficient for the implementation of instructional changes. In this study, the focus school undergoing the most significant instructional changes has had staff development programs in science, reading, and writing. Teachers at this school concentrate on one content area each year for intensive staff development. Even though individual teachers may adjust their instructional practices without them, long term staff development programs seem to be essential for schoolwide instructional change.

We have identified several factors that are facilitating the implementation of instructional changes in some of the focus schools. Smaller school size, principals who take on the role of strong instructional leaders, funding for staff development, and an ethos of shared teacher-student responsibility for student learning are associated with the degree to which schools are committed to carrying out initiatives that affect teaching practices. We expect these instructional innovations in the regular classroom to play a pivotal role in the achievement of the goals of Chicago school reform.

INTRODUCTION

This three part report describes several endeavors that have resulted from school reform in fourteen sample schools. We have observed council meetings, attended school functions, and interviewed key informants in these schools since January 1990.

The first section describes the 14 councils that we observe in some detail. We have included considerable information about these councils, including who the members are, how often they attend meetings, what they discuss, and who contributes to the discussions. Our purpose in this section is to determine the extent to which councils are fulfilling their basic responsibilities under the school reform act.

Next, we describe the principal evaluation and selection process. This part of the report examines three cases: one council that retained its incumbent principal, one council that hired a new principal, and a third council that decided not to rehire its incumbent principal but was unable to select a new one. These examples help us to understand the complexities involved in principal selection and the capacity of councils to perform this task.

Finally, we discuss important school improvement issues in the third section. Here, we describe our analysis of school improvement plans in the 14 schools, teacher participation in developing these plans, and most importantly, the degree to which these plans promote instructional change in the schools.

This is the fifth report in our in-depth study of local school councils. One paper described how we obtained permission from councils to study them. The second paper provided a detailed analysis of council meetings during the first year of school reform. The third described principals' early perceptions of school reform. The most recent, *Making the Most of School Reform: Suggestions for More Effective Local School Councils*, contains a set of practical suggestions based on our observations of over 250 council meetings. These reports are part of our project *Monitoring and Researching the Effects of School Reform in Chicago* and are available on request.

I. LOCAL SCHOOL COUNCILS AND THEIR MEETINGS

John Q. Easton, Susan Flinspach, Darryl Ford, Jesse Qualls, Susan Ryan and Sandra Storey; with Paula Gill and Todd Ricard

This section of our report briefly summarizes a great deal of information about local school councils and their meetings. Based on our observations of meetings, we are presenting basic descriptions of these councils: how often they meet, how long their meetings last, and who the members are and how often they attend meetings. In addition, and more relevant to the ultimate task of determining the impact of these councils, we describe what the councils discuss, deliberate and decide.

Local School Council Meetings

Between September 1, 1990 and June 30, 1991 our fourteen sample schools scheduled a total of 191 meetings. We attended 177 of them (93 percent). Twenty-two of these meetings did not have a quorum, but half of them discussed business anyway. Our analyses are based on the 166 meetings that we attended where councils discussed school business whether or not they had a quorum.

On the average, each council scheduled approximately 13 or 14 meetings this year. One school had as many as 25 meetings, two had as few as 9. The meetings lasted for about one and three-quarters hour. Some schools had very long meetings (averaging two and a half hours), other schools had short meetings (three-quarters of an hour). The audiences at council meetings included about 10 adults and two or three children per meeting. Some councils typically drew an audience of as many as 50 adults, whereas others had only about five present on average.

When we compare this year's council meetings to those that we attended last year, during the first year of school reform, we find that meetings have become somewhat shorter, with a few exceptions. Overall attendance of guests is relatively unchanged, although it is slightly higher in most of our elementary schools and slightly lower in our high schools.

Council Members

One initial concern about school based management in Chicago and local school councils was that parents and community representatives with little school involvement or experience would be elected to positions on the councils. From our brief survey of council members, we found that these fears were generally unfounded.

Taken as a group, the parent and community members were relatively well educated and had significant prior experience as volunteers in their schools and communities. On average, elementary parents had one year of college and five years volunteer experience in their schools. High school parents and elementary and high school community representatives had more education--on average, three or more years of college. These

members had volunteered in their schools for about three years before joining their council. Parents and community representatives reported about eight or nine years of community volunteering. The elementary school parents were in their late thirties, and high school parents and community representatives were somewhat older, generally in their early to mid-forties. The typical member then is educated, mature and experienced. In reality, individual members differ from this profile, with many having more or less experience and education. Educational levels also differ from school to school. Parent members averaged as much as four years of college and as little as tenth grade education in the ten elementary schools. The range was not as great in the high schools.

Stability of Council Membership

Stability is an important factor to consider in discussing the capacity of a governing body to deliberate, make decisions and monitor program implementation. Like all other organizations, local school councils are susceptible to mobility and turnover. Parents are no longer eligible to serve on the council when their children graduate or transfer out of a school. Community members, teachers and principals also move and change jobs. During this initial term, local school councils also evaluated and rehired or dismissed principals.

Stability and Turnover in Sample LSCs
October 1989 to July 1991

School	Stability	Turnover
A	81.8	18.2
B	63.6	36.4
C	72.7	27.3
D	63.6	54.5
E	72.7	27.3
F	100.0	0.0
G	81.8	18.2
H	63.6	45.5
I	63.6	54.5
J	81.8	18.2
W	54.5	63.6
X	81.8	18.2
Y	45.5	54.5
Z	90.9	9.1
Overall	72.7	31.8

*Schools A-J are elementary schools, W-Z are high schools

In our fourteen schools, 72.7 percent of the members elected in October 1989 remained on their councils at the end of June 1991. One of our schools had a 100 percent stability rate--all eleven of their members remained on the council until the end of the second school year. At the other extreme, another council had only five of its original members still on the council nearly two years later (a stability rate of only 45.5 percent). Twelve of the fourteen schools had seven or more of their original members still on the council.

We found that the chairperson was more likely than any other member to remain on the council. The community members and the teachers were next (both at 82 percent). Ten of our fourteen schools had the same principal at the end of the two year term (71.4 percent stability). Parents (excluding the chairperson) were least likely to remain on the councils (62.9 percent).

Another way of looking at change in the membership of the councils is to inspect turnover. We counted the number of people who actually left councils between October

1989 and June 1991.[1] The total turnover for the fourteen councils was 31.8 percent. In other words, approximately one-third (49) of the members on these councils were replaced or left an unfilled vacancy during the two-year period.

One school had no turnover (0 percent). At the other extreme, one school had seven members leave their council (a turnover rate of 63.6 percent), two of whom had been appointed to fill previous vacancies. This LSC had six members who served the full two year term. Three other councils lost six members (54.5 percent turnover.)

Attendance of Council Members

Attendance at LSC Meetings (in percents), 1990-91			
Member	Average	Low	High
Principal	88.1	52.6	100.0
Chair	91.0	71.4	100.0
Teachers	83.9	63.6	100.0
Other Parents	59.4	34.0	93.3
Community	59.3	26.9	100.0
All	69.3	58.2	84.8

During the 1990-91 school year, we observed an overall attendance rate of 69.3 percent at council meetings. This is equivalent to about 7.6 members present out of the total of 11 council members. (The high school student council members aren't included in this calculation.[2]) The highest attendance rate was 84.8 percent (over nine people present at each meeting on the average) and the lowest was 58.7 percent (six or seven members at most meetings--barely making the quorum of six).

In our sample, the chairperson attended meetings more often than any other council members (91.0 percent of the time). Principals were next most often present (88.1 percent), followed by teachers (83.9 percent), then by other parents and community members, with much lower attendance (59.4 percent and 59.3 percent, respectively).

More stable councils tended to have higher attendance. This is not an unexpected finding, since we have observed that members with poor attendance (due to illness and other reasons) are more likely to resign from councils than members who can attend more meetings. In addition, vacancies themselves contributed to low attendance at less stable LSCs, since vacancies often remained unfilled for a period.

Attendance at LSC meetings did not change greatly between 1989-90 and 1990-91, although the trend is toward lower attendance, especially in the four high schools. Principal attendance was lower in 1990-91 than in 1989-90 because two principals in this sample did

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[1] This is not just the opposite of stability. Ten people could stay and at the same time more than one person could leave. One slot on the council could have several different people fill it in the course of two years. Thus the sum of stability and turnover can exceed 100 percent (e.g., School D).

[2] In our four high schools, the average student attendance at council meetings was 31.7 percent. The highest was 46.2 percent and the lowest 11.1 percent. The best attending student attended fewer than half of the meetings. Student members were generally not appointed to the councils until later in the school year.

not receive contracts this year and thereafter stopped attending council meetings in mid-winter before a new principal was appointed.

Content of Local School Council Meetings

Local school council members listen to, consider, and discuss a wide range of business at their meetings. In order to analyze the councils' business, we have broken down the total contents of the LSC meetings into "topics of discussion." To the extent possible, our "topics" provide an complete summary of the subject material of meetings. Deciding what constituted a topic, or when one topic ended and another began, was not always clear cut. Nevertheless, all the observers agreed on standard procedures for dividing meeting discussions into topics. A topic consists of a single theme or subject. It ends when the focus of discussion moves on to the next subject.

We have classified each meeting topic into one of seven general areas and then more specifically into one of nineteen categories. During the 166 meetings that we observed where business was conducted, the councils considered a total of 1,685 topics, about 10 topics per meeting.

LSC Topics

The greatest number of topics, about 32 percent, dealt with administrative concerns of running the LSCs themselves. We have divided these topics into six specific categories: *LSC procedures, business and relationships; LSC attendance and vacancies; District reports and business; LSC announcements and correspondence; LSC training; and Changes to the school reform act.*

Of these LSC categories, the first, *LSC procedures, business and relationships,* is the largest with about 18 percent of the total. These topics were often setting meeting times and dates, electing officers, setting meeting procedures. Other examples of LSC procedure topics are: discussion about appointing a seventh or eighth grade student to serve on an elementary LSC; giving door prizes to increase the attendance and participation of audience members; and procuring money for LSC supplies from the district office.

LSC attendance and vacancy issues make up approximately four percent of the topics our LSCs considered during 1990-91. Almost every LSC we observed had to take action on member absences and council vacancies. According to the original provisions of the school reform act, LSCs could not replace a member who consistently failed to attend meetings until he officially resigned. Thus, securing letters of resignation from non-attending members became council business. (This year, an amendment to the reform act allows LSCs to remove chronically non-attending members.)

About four percent of the topics that LSCs considered dealt with *district reports and business*. Each LSC had an elected representative who attended district council meetings and then reported back to the LSC. The district report was a regular agenda item for many

LSCs and included information about such things as the evaluation process of the district superintendent, presentations given to the district council, and city-wide issues such as the teacher's contract. Some LSCs had to respond to district requests or requirements.

Another regular area of LSC business is *correspondence and announcements*. The chairperson was usually responsible for distributing correspondence and for deciding what to present at LSC meetings. Some chairpersons screened the mail and discussed only the most important items, whereas others read all correspondence received, sometimes word for word.

Number and Percent of LSC Topics by Topic Area, 1990-91

Topic Area/ Category	# times topic discussed	% of all discussion
LSC Topics	**535**	**31.8**
LSC Procedures, etc.	302	17.9
LSC Attendance	70	4.2
District Reports	65	3.9
Announcements	41	2.4
Training	36	2.1
Reform Act	21	1.2
School Program	**452**	**26.8**
Administration	268	15.9
Curriculum	110	6.5
SIPs	54	3.2
Overcrowding	20	1.2
Finance	**215**	**12.8**
Budget	157	9.3
Fund Raising	58	3.4
Personnel	**154**	**9.1**
Principal	98	5.8
Other personnel	56	3.3
Building, Safety & Discipline	**151**	**9.0**
Discipline & Security	90	5.3
Infrastructure	61	3.6
Parent Involvement	**98**	**5.8**
Parent/Community	86	5.1
Neighborhood	12	0.7
Other	**80**	**4.7**

The fourteen councils addressed other LSC topics infrequently. For instance, only two percent of all topics discussed this year dealt with *LSC training*. At one school, the members discussed their need for training to prepare themselves for evaluating their principal. Parent and community members at this school were particularly concerned that they did not have a complete understanding of what criteria should be applied in evaluating a principal's performance. The teacher representatives were much less concerned about receiving formal training in this area, believing that the LSC had more pressing training needs. This discussion continued, intermittently, for several months. Finally, the council agreed to attend a Board-sponsored workshop on principal evaluation procedures.

The LSC category with the fewest topics is *changes to the school reform act*. In late November 1990, the Illinois Supreme Court found the LSC election procedures in the reform act to be unconstitutional. This provided an opportunity to amend the law, and some councils paid close attention to proposed changes. During the April meeting at one school, council members filled out the LSC survey for the Education Reform Summit, a forum on amending the school reform act. The council chairperson attended the Summit and at the next LSC meeting, gave a presentation about what was discussed and distributed materials concerning possible amendments.

School Program Topics

The broad topic area of school programs contains four related categories of topics: *school administration; curriculum and instruction; school improvement planning;* and *overcrowding*. Approximately twenty-seven percent of the topics discussed in our councils this year dealt with school programs.

Over half of the school program topics pertain to *school administration*. A considerable proportion of these topics are announcements about the school, frequently made during the principal's report to the council (a regular agenda item for most of our LSCs). Other topics concern issues of school management such as the scheduling of programs and classes, decisions about enrollments and buses, etc. School administration topics account for 60 percent of all school program topics and 16 percent of all topics discussed at the LSC meetings.

One illustration of a school administration topic was a heated council discussion about an elementary school's promotion and graduation policies. During his report, the principal presented two letters he intended to send to the homes of eighth graders who were at risk of not graduating with their peers. Several council members expressed concern over the letters and other aspects of promotion, and they passed a motion to include them on the evening's agenda. When the letters were brought up again, the debate expanded to include the possibilities of establishing an at-risk program and of instituting mid-year graduations. The council decided to refer the letters and potential changes in the promotion and graduation policies to its education committee for review. At a later meeting, the education committee reported that it would defer to the teachers on the issue of promotions this year, but would take up the topic again next year. This topic could have significant impact on school policy for student graduation, promotion and retention.

About one-fourth of the school program topics are classified as *curriculum and instruction*. At one school, the council discussed textbook selection at several meetings. During an October meeting, the principal noted that the school needed to order new books soon. The LSC then discussed purchasing texts that would tie in with the school's goals and with the standardized tests students take. Members suggested that the faculty form a committee to study the issue. The faculty committee kept the council informed about its progress and during a February LSC meeting, the teachers brought samples of the selected textbooks for council members to review. The principal commented that, following the LSC review, the textbooks would be ordered as soon as possible.

The remaining quarter of the school program topics are coded either as *school improvement planning,* those that referred specifically to the school improvement plan (SIP), or as *overcrowding*. According to the school reform act, LSCs are supposed to review the three year school improvement plan approved in spring 1990 and its implementation as part of their monitoring duties. The school reform act then charges the councils with revising the original plans based on their reviews. The length, importance, and frequency of SIP topics differed markedly from school to school. Some councils discussed SIP topics

thoroughly and carefully whereas others gave the SIP their briefest attention. The contrast in the process of reviewing and revising the plans at two of our focus schools provides an interesting illustration of SIP topics.

At the first school, council members spent many hours in committee and council meetings reviewing and revising the SIP. Throughout the year, these committees met to decide how best to achieve their curricular goals in areas such as reading, math, and science. Committees presented their recommendations to the LSC for discussion. In March and April, the LSC held five council meetings to review and revise the plan. The council discussed the initiatives that had been implemented in the 1990-91 school year and debated the proposed revisions. At the fourth meeting, the principal presented a draft of the new SIP. The LSC studied the draft and called for more revisions. The final version of the plan was submitted and approved on April 30th. Council members at this school developed a thorough understanding of their school improvement plan, and they played a significant role in its development.

In contrast, the LSC at the second school, did not review the existing SIP, even though they had requested implementation reports from various teacher committees. SIP revisions had to be approved before May first, and the council saw the revised plan for the first time at their last meeting before the deadline. Some of the members expressed their reluctance to approve an extensive plan that they had no opportunity to read. Nevertheless, because of the time pressures, the principal asked the LSC to go ahead and approve the revised school improvement plan, and the council did so.

Three of our focus schools are overcrowded, and the LSCs at all of those schools discussed *overcrowding* issues this school year. At one elementary school, the principal suggested not enrolling any kindergartners from outside the attendance area. At another elementary school, the LSC chairperson regularly informed the council about steps taken towards the construction of a new building for the lower grades. Last year this council succeeded in obtaining approval for this new building.

Finance Topics

The finance topics include LSC deliberations about revenue raising, budgeting, and expenditures. About thirteen percent of the topics that councils discussed dealt specifically with finance. We have broken the finance topics down into two categories: *finance and budgeting*, and *school fund raising*.

Finance and budgeting is the larger of the two finance categories, and is the third largest category of topics overall. More than nine percent of the topics LSCs discussed this year dealt with *finance and budgeting*. Councils are responsible for approving both the expenditure of discretionary funds and the final school budget. Unfortunately, the approval process did not always function smoothly. For example, the budget had to be loaded into the central office's computer system before May first. Council members at one school were frustrated to discover this when they met to talk about the budget at their May first meeting.

Budgeting took place at other times of the year as well. During the autumn and winter meetings, councils used funds to restore positions lost because of enrollment declines or cuts. Some finance and budgeting topics were essentially discussions of the cost effectiveness of different proposals, such as one LSC's debate over repairing ditto machines or buying a copier. Occasionally they also included defending the LSC's authority over budgeting matters. One LSC came into conflict with the school's ESEA parent council over the ESEA budget. The LSC passed a motion to override the budget decisions of the ESEA parents and to budget the ESEA funds themselves.

The second category of finance topics is *school fund raising*. LSCs rely on two strategies for fund raising: soliciting resources from businesses, corporations and foundations, and holding fund raisers. The first strategy includes writing grants. One LSC, for example, decided to apply for an Ameritech grant, the 1991 Local School Council Awards Program. The principal asked members to form an LSC committee to complete the 24-page application. At the next two council meetings, she asked the council for further ideas and kept them informed about the committee's progress. The committee completed and submitted the application by the May 31st deadline. Ameritech selected this school and council as one of the 26 winners, and awarded them a $10,000 grant.

Many schools held traditional fund raisers. One principal reported to the LSC that the school's candy sales and book fairs had grossed more than $4500. They planned to set $2000 aside for the eighth-graders' field trip to Springfield. Another council resolved that the PTA did not need LSC approval to hold a fund raiser, but added that the school (or LSC)--not the PTA--should decide how to spend the money.

Personnel Topics

About nine percent of the topics that LSCs addressed this year are personnel matters. The first personnel category is *principal evaluation, selection and contract*. The second personnel category includes LSC discussions on all *other school personnel*.

Almost six percent of this year's topics of discussion deal with principal evaluation issues. All councils are responsible for evaluating their principals annually and for informing their district superintendent of the results. In addition, once every four years an LSC must decide either to retain its current principal or to select another. Nine of our 14 schools had selected their principal during 1989-90 and therefore, most of these items took place in the remaining five schools. Part II of this report discusses principal evaluation and selection in our focus schools and features illustrations of how three councils dealt with these tasks.

The second personnel category includes discussions about all *other school personnel*--from clerical staff to assistant principals. Some of these topics concern defining the job requirements of certain staff members. Several elementary councils, for example, debated whether to have their assistant principals be full-time administrators or half-time administrators with half-time teaching responsibilities. Some personnel topics are

deliberations about cutting staff and others are about hiring. Slightly over three percent of the topics considered by LSCs this year deal with other personnel.

Building, Security and Safety Topics

Another general area of topics deals with the issues of maintenance, improvement, and security of the building; the safety and security of school personnel, students, and their possessions; and regulations on student behavior. We coded the building concerns as *school infrastructure/building safety* and the rest of the topics as *security, safety and discipline*. Together these two categories make up nine percent of the topics LSCs discussed this year.

The category of *security, safety and discipline*, about 5 percent of all topics discussed this year, covers a broad range of topics, from crossing guards and parent patrols to attendance and discipline policies and dress codes. For example, two councils discussed forming parent patrols to monitor the safe arrival and dismissal of students in response to violent activities on or near the school grounds. At one high school, the LSC, principal and teachers worked together to develop a tardy policy. A few of our councils deliberated extensively about dress codes for the students though many gave up their dress code proposals because of lack of support or implementation difficulties.

One high school LSC worked on forming a new discipline code. The issue first arose in the fall, but an incident in which a student brought a weapon into the school spurred action on the matter in the spring. An LSC committee developed two proposals for a code of conduct and presented them to the council during a regular May meeting. The council reviewed both versions of the code, and discussed the feasibility of enforcing each one. They also compared the regulations concerning expulsion in the two proposals with the uniform discipline guidelines for Chicago Public Schools. Although they still had not yet decided which version to adopt by the June meeting, they continued to examine ways to make the code enforceable and consistent with citywide guidelines.

School infrastructure/building safety constitutes about three and one-half percent of the total topics. Some of these topics dealt with building renovations. At two schools, the LSC discussed the budgeting and timing of building repairs. One school monitored improvements to the science and computer labs and the completion of repairs on the auditorium in time for graduation.

This category also includes maintenance issues. At one high school, the school engineer regularly attends LSC meetings. He spoke to the council about the lack of money for maintenance and informed them that requisitions to the central office were not being filled. One elementary school LSC asked the school engineer to attend an LSC meeting because at previous meetings a number of LSC members and non-LSC teachers had complaints or questions about school maintenance.

Parent and Community Involvement and Neighborhood Relations Topics

The parent and community topic area comprises approximately six percent of the topics that LSCs considered this year. The two categories in this topic area are *parent and community involvement* and *neighborhood relations*. *Parent and community involvement* includes topics dealing with activities designed to increase parent and community commitment to the school and the groups organizing those activities. Topics classified as *neighborhood relations* are discussions about the school's role and image in its neighborhood.

The vast majority of the topics in this area had to do with parent and community involvement. For example, one principal used LSC meetings as a forum to encourage parent involvement. She discussed several parent issues at the first LSC meeting of the school year. She introduced the school's Parent Resource Team and described its services to the school; she explained the duties of parent volunteers and specified which parent positions receive stipends; and she announced plans for workshops and grade-level meetings to instruct parents about helping their children and assisting the teachers. At the January meeting, she introduced all the parent volunteers in attendance and thanked them for their contributions to the school.

Besides topics that deal with efforts to increase parent volunteerism, this category also includes open houses, reports from parent clubs, and communication between the school and its parents and community. One elementary school, for example, hosted a parent orientation/open house. At the meeting following the parent orientation, the LSC discussed the event and asked for suggestions about how it could be improved the following year. Another elementary council considered ways to encourage the parents of kindergartners to enroll their children the next year as first graders at the school, rather than at a nearby Catholic school. They decided to hold a tea for these parents.

Although still relatively few in number, parent and community involvement topics increased in most schools this year from the previous year. Eight of the twelve councils that we observed both years discussed more topics in this area during the second year.

Neighborhood relations constitutes less than one percent of the topics discussed at LSC meetings this year and is the smallest category of topics. These topics focus on efforts to improve the school's standing in the community and its interactions with its neighbors. In one high school, the principal received a letter of praise from a person living in the school community. The letter commended the principal on recent improvements in the school's appearance and on putting an end to the loitering and fighting that had once been present. At one elementary school, a representative from a community organization suggested that this school and four others in the same area consider opening their gyms for neighborhood children's activities.

Other topics

About five percent of the topics LSCs discussed this year dealt with issues not classified under the categories previously described. Most of these topics concern requests to conduct studies in the focus schools or to use school auditoriums or other facilities for meetings or other events. Several other topics in this area concern a park near one of the elementary schools.

Differences Among Councils

Councils differ from each other in what topics they discuss at their meetings. We have just described the content of council meetings in all 14 sample schools. This description, however, masks big differences among councils. Personnel is one area where school-to-school differences are obvious. Five of the 14 schools selected a principal this year. As expected, most of these councils discussed more personnel topics than other councils. In fact, in the two schools that did not retain their principal this year, personnel topics accounted for about one-quarter of their topics for the entire year. On the other hand, two councils that retained their principal devoted as little as five percent of their council topics to personnel.

Overall, issues about the LSC itself made up the largest topic area. However, school program was the most prevalent topic in 5 councils and personnel was the most frequent topic in a sixth council. The percent of council topics devoted to LSC issues ranges from a high of 41.0 percent to a low of 21.4 percent--a narrower range than we observed in the first year of school reform. No council was totally dominated by LSC issues in this second year. However, as before, we found that LSCs with lower attendance and less stability of membership discussed more LSC issues than councils with higher attendance, more stability and less turnover. The council that had the most turnover devoted 11 percent of its topics to discussing vacancies and attendance of members. At the opposite extreme, the council with no turnover never discussed council vacancies or attendance of members. It will be important to learn if attendance and vacancy issues remain an important arena of concern during the second term of LSC membership during reform's third and fourth years.

Councils also differ in how much they emphasize important topics in their meetings. Finance and budget topics (not including school fund raising) accounted for 16 percent of the business of two councils. This crucial topic accounted for six percent or less of the content of meetings at six other councils. The percent of topics devoted to the School Improvement Plan ranged from a high of 7 percent at two schools to a low of 1 percent at three schools. One council played a significant role in the development of its SIP by reviewing and discussing revisions over a series of LSC meetings. At least one other council approved the revised plan on first inspection at the meeting preceding the due date for the plan. Although, overall, these councils assigned relatively little of their agendas to this topic, we have other evidence, presented in Part III of this paper, showing that teachers were very involved in developing SIPs. It may be true that other similarly important business is

conducted outside of council meetings and that councils delegate or share important work with other groups within the school.

One council had 12 percent of its topics classified as "other," whereas most have between 1 and 3 percent of their topics in this category. This council, which had high member stability, high attendance, and high participation of council members, assumed an activist role in its larger community. They discussed and developed plans for collaborative programs with the park district and the public library. In effect, they extended the range of their interest beyond the school building to create additional educational experiences for their students.

On the one hand, the variability of council meeting content among different schools reflects the interests and needs of the schools. For example, several councils discussed safety and security issues frequently, while other councils with fewer problems in this area never discussed this topic. On the other hand, a few councils became so overwhelmed by major concerns that they neglected important issues in other areas. The two councils that did not re-hire incumbent principals (see Part II) rarely discussed curriculum and instruction or current school administration issues. Similarly, a council with many internal LSC concerns had very few SIP and other school program topics.

Participation in Local School Council Meetings

During our observations of council meetings, we recorded which members participated in the presentation or discussions of each topic that came before the council. On the average, 3.3 council members participated in each of the 1,685 coded topics (about 44 percent of the members attending participated in each topic).

The most participation occurred when councils discussed *Overcrowding*, with more than four members participating. *School improvement planning*, *Finance and budget*, and *LSC attendance* also had very high participation rates.

Participation drops to between three and four members for eleven other categories. These are, in order: *Principal evaluation and selection*, *Security, safety, and discipline*, *Curriculum and instruction*, *LSC training*, *LSC procedures*, *Changes to the School Reform Act*, *Other personnel*, *Neighborhood relations*, *School fund raising*, *School infrastructure*, and *Parent and Community involvement*.

Council participation was lowest (between two and three members) for *District Reports*, *School Administration*, *Other topics*, and *LSC Announcements*. These categories included many announcements and informational reports that required little discussion.

Average Number of Participants by Topic Area, 1990-91	
Topic Area/ Category	Average # LSC members participating
LSC Topics	**3.3**
LSC Procedures, etc.	3.4
LSC Attendance	4.0
District Reports	2.9
Announcements	2.0
Training	3.6
Reform Act	3.3
School Program	**3.2**
Administration	2.8
Curriculum	3.6
SIPs	4.2
Overcrowding	4.4
Finance	**3.8**
Budget	4.0
Fund Raising	3.2
Personnel	**3.6**
Principal	3.8
Other personnel	3.3
Building, Safety & Discipline	**3.4**
Discipline & Security	3.6
Infrastructure	3.0
Parent Involvement	**3.0**
Parent/Community	3.0
Neighborhood	3.3
Other	**2.6**

Principals, as a group, participated in more discussions than any other council member. They participated in 1,177 topics out of 1,685, a participation rate of 69.9 percent[3]. The LSC chairpersons had a somewhat lower participation rate than the principals--57.9 percent of the total possible.

We have looked at participation rates of different members of the council for each school and found great differences in how frequently different members of the council participated. Principal participation in council meetings varied from a high of 91.8 percent to a low of 46.2 percent. Participation of chairpersons, like the principals' participation, was also quite variable, ranging from a high of 74.2 percent to a low of 28.6 percent. On the whole, chairperson participation is higher where principal participation is lower, and chairperson participation is lower where principal participation is higher.

Teacher members generally participated in approximately one-third of the topics discussed. Between schools, participation of teachers also varied greatly. The average teacher members participated in more than half of the topics at one school while the teacher members participated in only one-fifth of the topics at another.

Other council members had much lower participation rates. Parents (other than the chairperson) participated in fewer than 20 percent of all the topics that these fourteen sample schools considered in 166 meetings. Community members participated in over 25 percent. The participation of other parents was low across all schools but highly variable, ranging from about 33 percent in one school to less than 10 percent in another. The range of community member participation was wide, from more than 50 percent in one school to less than 5 percent.

[3]This statistic can be adjusted for absences, since council members can't participate when they're not present. Principal participation is about 75 percent of all topics for which they were present. The subsequent participation rates do not adjust for absences.

Different members of the council were more likely to participate in some topic areas than in others. Principals participated most in school program and budget and finance topics and least often in personnel issues (because so many personnel issues involved principal evaluation and selection). The chairpersons participated most frequently in LSC and personnel issues and least in school program issues. Teachers participated most in budget and finance and personnel topics; community members most in personnel and LSC issues and least in other issues; and other parents at about equally low levels in all topic areas.

The total amount of participation at council meetings differed from one school to another. At one school, only two members participated in the average topic that came before their council. At the other extreme, four or five members of another council participated in each topic they considered. The difference in total rate of participation between councils depends mainly on the parents (excluding the chair) and the community members. Principals, chairpersons, and teachers participate at much steadier rates from one council to another than other parents and community members. Interestingly, teacher and principal participation rates are unrelated to parent and community member participation. However, parent and community member participation rates are associated with each other so that in schools where one group participates more, so does the other. We have noticed that councils that have greater parent and community member participation tend to have more frequent and longer meetings. Presumably, the active involvement of parents and community members requires these councils to spend more time in meetings.

Audience members also participated in council business at meetings in these schools. On the average, a person who was not on the council participated in approximately every other topic that came before these councils (0.6 for each topic). The greatest amount of audience participation occurred for personnel topics, followed by security, safety and building. Not surprisingly, audience members participated least in LSC issues. Audience participation in council meetings also varied from one school to another. The school with the most guest participation had six times as much as the school with the least.

Discussion of Council Meetings

Drawing from our observations, we can conclude that these 14 councils were fulfilling their most basic obligations. The councils met, they deliberated and discussed relevant matter, they made decisions and approved appropriate material. Turnover, poor attendance, and vacancies continued to plague some councils. However, even these councils were able to attain quorums at most of their scheduled meetings.

In the two years since elected, these councils have selected or retained principals and approved budgets and school improvement plans. They have accomplished these tasks with differing levels of success. We have noted a great deal of variability in their degree of involvement, especially in the budget and in the school improvement planning. Some councils became engaged in these processes and contributed their energies and thoughts to

the final products. Other councils gave only cursory approval, as required by the school reform act. The next parts of this report discuss the principal selection process and school improvement plans in these fourteen school and consider the role of the LSC in each.

Councils members were engaged in council business in varying degrees. For the most part, principals and chairpersons participated actively in council meetings, frequently sharing a leadership role. There are extremes, though. The two principals in this sample who were not rehired stopped attending council meetings before their terms had expired. Two other principals participated in over 90 percent of their council's topics, to some extent dominating council affairs.

Although we observed differences in teacher participation in these 14 councils, they are not nearly as great as the differences in parent and community member participation. In only five of the 14 sample schools do parents and community members participate in more than 20 percent of topics that their councils consider. This low participation is partly due to poor attendance, vacancies, and turnover, but even after adjusting for these factors, we see relatively lower participation among parents and community members.

We hope that newly elected councils will consider our findings as they begin their two year terms. Councils can use these findings to help them evaluate their actions and determine the extent to which their council is contributing to improvement in their school.

II. PRINCIPAL EVALUATION AND SELECTION IN 14 SAMPLE SCHOOLS

Darryl J. Ford

According to the School Reform Act, LSCs have the duties and powers "to evaluate the performance of the principal of the attendance center taking in consideration the annual evaluation of the principal conducted by the subdistrict superintendent...." Each LSC decides how to review and evaluate its principal, taking the district superintendent's evaluation of the principal into account. Consequently, how councils conduct their principal's evaluation and the selection process can differ. In this section, we first summarize the decisions that the 14 LSCs in our monitoring and researching study made regarding principal evaluation and selection. The summary includes general facts like what year these councils evaluated their principals and whether or not the incumbent principal received a four year contract. Next, we detail how three schools dealt with principal evaluation and selection. These examples illustrate one LSC that retained its principal, one council that selected a new principal, and one LSC that chose not to retain its incumbent but could not decide among its finalists and passed the choice on to the district superintendent. Finally, we draw some conclusions about the principal evaluation and selection processes of the schools in our study.

Overview of the Process

One of the most important decisions that local school councils made during the first two years of school reform was whether or not to offer its principal a four year contract. As stipulated in the School Reform Act, one half of Chicago Public School principals came up for review during the 1989-90 school year and the second half in the 1990-91 academic year. An LSC could opt to offer its principal a four year performance contract, or could choose to open the process to interview other candidates for the job. If an LSC could not agree upon a new principal, the district superintendent decided from a list of three names supplied by the council.

System-wide, during the 1989-90 school year, 276 schools dealt with principal evaluation and selection. 226 local school councils, or 82%, retained their incumbent principal; 50 councils, or 18%, selected new principals for the school. During the 1990-91 school year, 251 schools dealt with principal evaluation and selection. 184 councils, or 73%, kept their incumbent principal; 65 councils, or 26%, selected new principals for their schools. Over the course of two years, 22% of the LSCs selected new principals. When the principals who retired immediately prior to the enactment of the Chicago School Reform Act are considered, the turnover in principal leadership at the school level is significantly greater. At the end of the second year of school reform, 38% of Chicago's public schools are being led by principals who were not principals at those schools prior to reform.[4]

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[4]For data on principal retention, see *Closer Look*, February, 1991, Designs for Change. Additional data on principal retention provided by the Office of Reform Implementation of the Chicago Public Schools.

During the first year, nine of the fourteen principals of the schools in our monitoring and researching study had their contracts reviewed. At these schools, six LSCs decided to award performance contracts to their incumbent principals; two LSCs awarded contracts to their interim principals; and one LSC chose not to retain its interim principal and selected a new educational leader.

Principal Selection Decisions by 14 Local School Councils		
	1989-90	1990-91
Principals Retained	6 Incumbents 2 Interims 8 Total Retained	3 Incumbents
Principals Not Retained	1 Interim	2 Incumbents

Five of the fourteen LSCs in our study reviewed their principals during the second year. Three awarded contracts to their incumbent principals; one LSC selected a new principal; and another LSC, not able to muster enough votes for any principal candidate, became deadlocked. As a result, the district superintendent chose a principal for this school from a list of three candidates submitted by the council. The incumbent principal was not on the LSC's list of candidates submitted to the district superintendent.

Principal Evaluation: Three Illustrations

The process that LSCs undertook varied greatly from school to school in our sample. For example, some LSCs formed sub-committees, including both LSC and non-LSC members, to work on principal evaluation and selection, while others performed these duties as a committee of the whole council. Some schools surveyed the entire school community for input; others took a quicker and simpler approach. For example, one council never spoke openly about the evaluation process at its meetings and simply renewed the principal's contract. At another school, after offering the principal a contract, the council briefly discussed whether to include additional criteria in the contract. The LSC, however, decided that because its principal already did much more than expected, no additions to the contract were needed. Below, we describe in detail the principal evaluation and selection process of three schools. These illustrations are based on our extensive observations of LSC meetings in each of the schools. These depictions are primarily based on the public council forums open to us (regular LSC meetings) and not on the proceedings of closed sessions, except when later reported at regular council meetings. The illustrations describe councils that reviewed their principal during the 1990-91 school year.

School 1: Retaining an Incumbent Principal

From the onset of its principal review process, council members at School 1 considered how they would proceed to evaluate their principal at the same time as they decided what criteria to apply in this process. The LSC decided that the principal evaluation and selection committee would be a committee of the whole council, and at the very first LSC meeting of the year, the committee chairperson read a letter outlining

standards for the principal evaluation to the LSC. Throughout the fall, the LSC and the evaluation chair spoke about how they would evaluate the principal and what criteria would be used. Ideas about the evaluation process and criteria were presented at subsequent council meetings. It was then decided that committees would review various aspects of the school and make reports to be used as part of the principal evaluation. School Reports were formulated by sub-committees of the LSC concerning student progress at the school, staff development activities, parent and community involvement, and the effectiveness of other school programs. The chair of the evaluation committee also added that parents could provide input on the principal evaluation by completing a survey on Report Card Pick Up Day. A teacher council member suggested that each constituency represented on the LSC (parents, teachers, and community members) write two questions for the parent survey. After some discussion over whether the survey format was appropriate, the LSC agreed to conduct it with two questions from each constituency. Once completed, the survey provided parent perceptions about their children's reading and math improvement, the level of security at the school, and the conditions of the school facilities to be used as part of the principal evaluation.

In addition to the parent survey and the School Reports, this council developed other ways to review its principal. The LSC held three formal interviews with the principal, and the principal evaluation committee surveyed the faculty to get its input. The teacher members on the council also conducted a separate informal poll of the school staff in order to inform themselves before voting on the principal. Taking into account the District Superintendent's evaluation and the other evaluation mechanisms developed over the course of the school year, this LSC decided to retain its principal.

That [illegible] LSC retained its incumbent principal becomes more significant when considering that some council members and the principal did not always see eye to eye on LSC proceedings. One area of disagreement surrounded the school's budget. During meetings, the LSC chair would request that the principal provide the council with copies of the school's budget. The principal stated that she had honored every request that the LSC chair made for copies of the budget. Arguments often followed about whether the budget requests were in fact honored. At other times during council meetings, several LSC members would ask the principal very specific questions about different line items in the budget. The principal would attempt to address these issues, but stated that she needed to prepare answers to such specific questions ahead of time. Furthermore, when not satisfied with the information provided by the principal or that the principal had in fact provided information, some LSC members would contact different Board of Education offices to get information. This added to the strain between the principal and certain LSC members because the principal maintained that she had provided the same information but in order for these LSC members to accept it, they had to acquire the information from another source. The debate over the honoring of budget requests and those for other information was ongoing and often bitter between the principal and some LSC members.

Another event also positioned the principal opposite the LSC chair. At one meeting, the principal moved that the LSC support a formal motion of censure against the LSC

chairperson. This motion stated that the LSC chair engaged in "personally deliberate actions in school organizations which are characteristic of impeachable behavior," that the chair removed school equipment from the building without authorization, and that the LSC condemned such behaviors. The motion also stated that its purpose was to inform the LSC chair that such behaviors "are improper for one who serves in the important leadership role to which a council president is elected," and to ask the LSC chair to "comply fully with the stated and implied rules of the Chicago Board of Education and the rules of the school." After some deliberation, this motion passed with the support of all LSC members except the chair.

Although the principal and some council members often were at odds with one another, LSC members were concerned about remaining fair during the evaluation process. This theme surfaced on several occasions. For example, when discussing whether or not it was appropriate to have questions formulated by parents, teachers, and community representatives on the parent survey, the chair of the LSC urged committee members to make certain that this format was within the law by checking with the legal department of the Board of Education. Similarly, a teacher representative on the LSC advised that these questions should be carefully formulated. For example, he said that asking "How does your child like the teacher?" may be inappropriate. Noting that the student doesn't have to necessarily like his/her teacher, the teacher representative proposed that the question "How do you like your child's instruction?" would be more appropriate.

Despite the guidelines and procedures that this school developed to review the principal, problems did arise that required the council to examine whether the process was fair to the principal. At one council meeting, the principal expressed concerns over how the teachers' survey was conducted. The principal noted that the survey was distributed to teachers without her knowledge, and thought that it was unfair to ask the teachers to complete a lengthy survey on such short notice. Also, the principal maintained that the LSC chair haphazardly gave surveys to some teachers, but not to others, and the returned surveys were not kept confidential (teachers were seen reading other teachers' responses). LSC deliberations then shifted to a discussion of the chairperson's behavior. One council member noted that this was the second time that the principal questioned the council's chair's behavior and stated that problems exist "because of our chairperson." The LSC chair responded, "I'd rather move out of the position of chairperson; you all can vote on another chairperson...that takes away the issue that your chairperson keeps you away from dealing with other issues." No new chairperson was chosen and a community LSC member managed to get the council to focus on the issue at hand: what to do about the teacher's survey. To resolve this problem, the principal evaluation/selection committee administered the teachers' survey a second time, and specified the exact procedures for distribution and collection.

A teacher member of the LSC also expressed his concerns about fairness at this same meeting when he recommended that the LSC set a date to complete the evaluation process and tell the principal of its decision. After some conversation about the many tasks that needed to be completed as part of the evaluation, the council did set a target completion

date and notified the principal of its intent. An audience member at this meeting similarly expressed concerns regarding the evaluation process. She emphasized the serious nature of the task and said that she hoped that the LSC members would not let their personal views enter into their decision. She also worried about the "mind-set" of the LSC and told the council members that she hoped that when they voted on whether to retain the principal, they would vote the desires of their constituencies.

On the night that the LSC voted on its principal, the council heard public presentations. The people who spoke all supported the retention of the principal. One teacher read a memo from his students, thanking the principal for her assistance in the reading program in his room; a concerned parent who had been part of the school community for 12 years said the principal is the best that the school has had and admonished the LSC to put aside its council wars and retain the principal; another teacher asserted, "We are all here because of the children and the principal is our leader in everything....Her morals and ethics are above reproach." Another teacher related that the principal is one of the hardest working administrators that the school has ever had, that the school is larger than most high schools, and that the principal "is really for the students." Still another commented that the school programs are for the children and that the principal has tried to follow through on all the decisions that the Professional Personnel Advisory Committee has made. A math teacher offered, "The principal makes decisions according to the children....I would certainly recommend that we retain her and we will be lucky if she accepts."

In addition to hearing these endorsements of the principal, the chair of the principal evaluation and selection committee reported the results of the various parts of the evaluation. She stated that on a rating scale of 1 to 5, the principal received a 3.5 for answers given during principal interviews; 300 parent surveys were returned and on a scale of 1 to 4, the principal received an average of 3; and 22 teacher surveys were returned and on a scale of 1 to 4, the principal received an average of 3. The committee chair also reported the findings of the School Reports: 80% of the students are below norm in terms of achievement; there have been parent and community involvement programs implemented since the principal arrived; there is a discipline program in place in the school; some staff development has occurred; and that some teachers have used rewards as incentives. An LSC teacher representative also told the results of an informal staff poll, saying that 66 of 84 people who participated wanted the principal to be retained.

Though this LSC had only nine members voting on principal retention (there was one vacancy on the council at this time and the principal does not vote on this issue), the principal received the needed six votes to be retained, to loud applause. One LSC teacher representative stated (much to the satisfaction of the audience) that if anyone on the council could not support this principal, they needed to resign; another LSC member retorted, "I'm sure that we will support our principal."

School 2: Selecting a New Principal

The local school council at School 2 decided not to retain its principal and selected a new person to lead its school. Although this council came to an agreement on a new principal, the principal evaluation/selection process was characterized by strong emotions and feelings about how and what transpired.

A review of the LSC meeting proceedings reveals that early in the process, the tasks of principal evaluation and principal selection became entangled. For example, at one meeting, the LSC chair told the principal that the LSC was going to open the principal selection process "for option." To date, however, no public LSC vote on whether to retain the principal had occurred. The principal responded that it was the LSC's prerogative to open the process, but felt that the evaluation should be done by people who are familiar with the school. At a later meeting, the LSC discussed how it would go about the principal evaluation process and a teacher suggested that people observe the school and report back to the evaluation committee. Similarly, the LSC chair said that anybody who would like to report any information to her regarding the principal's evaluation could find her in the school building on most days. The LSC chair also announced that the council had decided to "open for option" the principal's selection process at its previous meeting.

This LSC had general discussion about principal evaluation at later meetings. The exact criteria, however, that the LSC would use to evaluate its principal were not specifically discussed during open council meetings. For example, the LSC spoke about the need to have several criteria by which to review the principal, but what these criteria would be was never mentioned in the public meetings. Likewise, the council discussed the need to get parent input, but the actual types of information to be collected from parents remained vague.

The difficulties that this council incurred culminated when the LSC chairperson announced that the principalship had been advertised in the General Superintendent's Personnel Bulletin even before the LSC had formally evaluated the current principal. The chair described how upset the principal became after seeing the job declared as vacant. The district superintendent began working with the LSC, instructed the council members to continue the evaluation process, and reminded them of the imminent deadlines for the principal evaluation/selection process. The council later apologized to the school's principal and retracted the advertisement for the principalship.

At the next meeting, the council again discussed its mistake. The principal said that he wanted to go on record saying that the LSC had acted irresponsibly and had not followed procedures concerning the evaluation process. He told the council that the bottom line is that it looks like the LSC is shopping for a principal. The principal also noted that he purposely stayed away from the evaluation because he did not want to influence it and told the council that if he were offered a contract outright, he would remain, but he would not reapply for the position. Council members again explained that they simply had made a mistake.

During this meeting, the LSC also discussed the possibility of sending a parent survey out the next day. Regarding this possibility, one teacher responded, "That is so rushed; it's like you are playing a game." The principal also expressed concerns over the survey, asking if there would be an accompanying letter of explanation with it and how the council would deal with surveys that students might fill out. LSC members acknowledged the possibility that some surveys might be filled out by students, but countered, "But at least we would have tried to contacted parents" and "All we want to do is get some feedback." The principal conceded that getting feedback was a legitimate concern, but again noted that the LSC has the legal authority to make principal evaluation and selection decisions, and stated, "This questionnaire may help you, but the deadline is being pushed; maybe the LSC doesn't have the luxury to do everything."

Taking the advice of the district superintendent, this council continued its evaluation process of the principal. The council interviewed the principal in executive session and considered the accomplishments in the school over the last five years. Although the faculty overwhelmingly voted 32 to 2 to retain the incumbent principal (some LSC members thought that some faculty members supported the incumbent because they were afraid of him; others maintained that the principal did not demand much from the teachers so the teachers wanted to keep things status quo), as a result of the evaluation, the council voted six to three not to retain the principal. Only the teacher LSC members, who voted the will of their colleagues, and one community member supported the incumbent principal. The other council members, however, felt that there had been little academic progress in the school under the incumbent's tenure and that the incumbent was not the person to lead the school. With its vote, this LSC began its search for a new school leader.

This LSC formed a new committee to work on principal selection. In addition to the LSC members, the committee was comprised of teachers and career service staff from the school. The principal position was re-advertised and the selection committee screened candidates' resumes, narrowed down the applicants, conducted interviews, and invited the four finalists to a candidates' forum to present their views on education and to answer questions from parents and LSC members. After the candidates' forum, the principal selection committee interviewed co-workers of each finalist. These background checks provided the committee with information about how each finalist interacted with his/her colleagues and students and about the potential leadership that each would provide.

At the next council meeting, the LSC members reported what they had learned from the background checks on the finalists. The council also heard the results of how the faculty voted for the finalists. The council members then went into closed session to discuss the principal selection. After meeting in executive session for over an hour, members returned to the public meeting and explained that they were almost deadlocked, but thought it was important for the principal selection decision to be made at the school level and not at the district office. Consequently, council members compromised and made a decision. One of the LSC teacher members explained that the two teachers members voted in executive session for the candidate that the faculty of the school had supported. She continued, saying that the teacher representatives repeatedly voted for this candidate until the compromise

was struck. At that time, they changed their vote to ensure that the LSC would pick a principal for the school. This LSC then held a public vote and unanimously selected the school's new principal.

The principal evaluation and selection process was emotionally charged at this school. The mistake of announcing the principalship as vacant was clearly upsetting to the school's incumbent principal and promoted rumors that the council had planned for over a year to get rid of the principal. Furthermore, as mentioned, the teachers of this school had overwhelmingly voted to retain the former principal, but the LSC chose not to do so. In addition, the LSC rejected the candidate supported by most of the teachers. Several parents also indicated their preference for a particular candidate for principal who was not selected. These circumstances led some teachers and parents to feel as if the LSC did not consider their views.

The principal selection process became even more difficult because the incumbent principal went on leave of absence during the selection process, leaving the building without a principal. While trying to select a new principal, the LSC also attempted to select an interim or acting principal. After much discussion, the council decided that it would offer the candidate selected as the new principal a contract contingent upon that person serving as interim until the end of the school year. The new principal agreed to this and served as interim principal for about the last eight weeks of school. Although this person started as interim only several days before the school improvement plan was due and the budget needed to be loaded into the computer, she was able to pull together an SIP which took into account the desires of the school community and met the budget deadline. Although faced with difficult tasks, this council was able to overcome various hurdles in its principal evaluation and selection processes and chose a new leader for the school.

School 3: Selection of a Principal by the District Superintendent

Having become deadlocked over which of three finalists should become the new principal, the local school council of School 3 submitted three names to the district superintendent to select a new principal. Although this LSC was itself unable to select its new principal, the principal evaluation process and the principal selection process seemed organized and systematic.

The local school council at School 3 began its principal evaluation process early in the 1990-91 academic year. In September, 1990, the council met with the district superintendent to get his input on the evaluation process. Soon after, the principal evaluation committee developed the forms that the LSC would use to evaluate its incumbent principal. These forms were discussed openly at an LSC meeting and the council decided that each member would rate the principal on the various areas of the evaluation and then averages would be totaled. These forms were completed in closed sessions that the council held with the principal. The chair of the evaluation committee also sought the services of an attorney from the Lawyer's Advisory Project to help make certain that the LSC followed

the law while conducting the principal evaluation. On several occasions, this lawyer met with the council in executive session while the LSC interviewed its incumbent principal.

In addition to executive sessions held with the principal, this LSC had an open meeting in order to hear the views of the school community about the principal. At the beginning of this meeting, the evaluation committee chairperson made it clear that the intent of the open forum was to collect information to help the LSC evaluate the principal. During this forum, several teachers and parents spoke about the excellent programs in the school and supported the principal. Only one parent made negative comments about the principal. At a later meeting, the council again heard the views of school community members regarding the principal. At this time, two letters (from a teacher and a principal of another school) which supported the principal and two others which did not support the principal were read. Parents, teachers, a community resident, a volunteer coach, the school engineer, and a student also offered their opinions about the school and its principal. With one exception, all comments were favorable towards the principal and the school's programs, and supported the principal's retention. Although the public comments were mostly in favor of retaining the incumbent principal, it was moved to open the principal selection process and to invite the incumbent principal to apply. This motion was supported by seven affirmative votes. Three LSC members, one teacher, one parent, and one community member, abstained from voting.

The local school council's efforts shifted from principal evaluation to principal selection at its February, 1991 council meeting when the LSC voted to open the principal selection process and invite the incumbent principal to apply for the job. Following this decision, the principal moved that the LSC reaffirm that he was the principal with all the powers of the position until June 30, 1991. This motion passed. The LSC chair then moved that the principal continue to work with the council on school matters for the remainder of the year. Although this motion passed, the principal's attendance rate at LSC meetings dropped dramatically after the LSC voted not to offer him a contract outright. At times, however, some LSC members would get needed information from the principal and bring it back to LSC meetings.

At later council meetings, the LSC appointed a subcommittee of the principal selection committee to establish a job description and develop criteria to screen candidates. At this time, they decided to advertise the principalship in the General Superintendent's Personnel Bulletin and in print media. The council also acquired a Post Office Box to receive candidates' applications.

In preparation for interviewing the principal candidates, the LSC participated in a training session on interviewing techniques, and after the principal selection committee screened the applicants, the LSC scheduled and held interviews. The council narrowed the field of applicants to seven candidates. Although the incumbent principal did apply for the job, he was not selected as a finalist. The seven finalists were invited to an open candidates' forum to answer questions from both LSC members and the audience.

The day following the forum, the LSC met to vote for a principal. In executive session, they selected three finalists. In the public meeting, the chair of the selection committee moved that the LSC submit these three names to the district superintendent to choose a principal. This motion did not pass. Another member moved to vote on the three candidates in alphabetical order. This motion passed; however, none of the three candidates received the seven votes required by law to select a new principal. Some people in the audience expressed their dissatisfaction. One person commented that the LSC was playing games; another stated that the decision should not go to the district; others said the council should compromise and just go ahead and pick the best person. Another person added that if the council members could not decide, they should ask the parents in the audience to choose. The LSC then took a second vote on the three candidates. Again, no single candidate received enough votes to be selected as principal. A council member then moved to vote a third time on the three candidates. This motion did not pass and was followed by a motion to submit the three names to the district superintendent. The latter motion passed, and the district superintendent later chose a principal from the three finalists. The district superintendent's choice as principal, however, was not the candidate who had received the most support when the council initially tried to select a principal.

Although this council seemed to work through the principal evaluation and selection processes very methodically, at times different participants expressed concerns. For example, early in the principal evaluation process, there was some question as to whether the principal had the right to vote when the LSC was deciding what evaluation forms to use for the principal evaluation. In addition, the principal asked whether it was legal to have an attorney sit in on the LSC's closed sessions. The principal also expressed concern over an unsigned letter being read which did not support his retention. He thought that because the letter was not signed, it should not be read. Furthermore, after the LSC decided not to retain the principal outright, the incumbent asked the council to explain its decision. He later addressed the council about his feelings and concerns, saying that he had provided leadership that resulted in school improvement, and that he should have been retained. The principal also expressed concern over the impropriety of an LSC member asking for a job and said that the parents, teachers, and community representatives were excluded from the evaluation process. These concerns were not addressed openly by the council. Additionally, the principal maintained that a council member said that if he applied for the principalship, his application should be thrown in the waste paper basket. Finally, some LSC members expressed concern about a letter written by one council member but sent under council auspices to the district superintendent and about the process the district superintendent used to select the new principal. Although these issues arose, this council was still able to work within the framework established by the School Reform Act.

Lessons Learned and Issues to be Explored

Each LSC in the three cases presented accomplished the tasks of evaluating and selecting a principal as required by the School Reform Act. Two of the three local school councils were themselves able to decide to retain a principal or to select a new principal. Although the third council was not able to select a new principal itself, it performed the

required principal evaluation duty and resorted to the mechanism outlined in the School Reform Act to have the district superintendent choose a new principal. The system worked for each school. The three cases present lessons to be learned by other councils when undertaking the principal evaluation and selection processes and identify several issues to explore further about the principal evaluation and selection processes as currently prescribed by the reform legislation.

In Schools 1 and 3, the principal evaluation process seemed to remain distinct from the principal selection process. In both schools, the LSCs first formally made a decision whether to retain their incumbent principal, and then, in School 3, the council dealt with principal selection once the retention decision was made. By contrast, the principal evaluation seemed to have become entangled with the principal selection and cause some problems in School 2. By its actions, the council openly gave the impression that it was not going to retain the incumbent principal, even prior to conducting the required evaluation. The councils in Schools 1 and 3 avoided this situation by having formally conducted the principal evaluation before embarking to select new principal (when necessary).

The councils in these three schools learned as they undertook the tasks of principal evaluation and selection. When mistakes occurred in School 1 and School 2, the appropriate committees and the LSCs tried to rectify them by using a standard of doing what was fair. When questions arose about the administration of a teachers' survey used for purposes of the principal evaluation, the LSC in School 1 decided to readminister it. Similarly, after inappropriately announcing that its principalship was vacant, the council in School 2 retracted the announcement and apologized to the principal.

The three cases also seem to identify issues that became apparent only after councils completed the processes of principal evaluation and selection. For example, the issue of the principal's role on the local school council at evaluation time surfaced in School 3 when the LSC needed to vote to approve the evaluation forms for the principal's review. It was questioned whether or not the principal should have voted on these forms. Although the principal in School 3 abstained from voting on this issue, the principal in School 1 was offered the opportunity to give input on the evaluation process. In School 2, the principal noted that he purposely distanced himself from the evaluation process so as not to influence the LSC. This issue of the principal's role on, and being a part of, the same group that is responsible for the principal evaluation needs further exploration.

These illustrations also identify the issue of "lame-duck" leadership. When a principal has not been retained by his or her council and two to four months remain in the school year, it is likely that the principal's commitment to the school and willingness to provide leadership to the council and school will wane. Furthermore, if a principal is not retained, his or her credibility among the staff and students of the school may decrease. The principal of School 2 took extended sick leave for the final months of the school year. Although the assistant principal and teachers assumed many of the important responsibilities usually performed by the principal, some staff members felt that many tasks (like budgeting) were not performed or were attended to in a hurried fashion. By contrast, the principal of School

3 asked the LSC to affirm that he was still the principal of the school until the end of June, 1991. In both cases, however, questions remain about how effective a principal will be once he or she is not retained as principal and how much the educational program suffers when this occurs.

Data on principal attendance rates at LSC meetings provide some insight into whether principals are available to provide leadership to councils at meetings once they have not been retained. As reported in the table on page 3 of this report, the average rate of attendance for principals in all schools in this study during 1990-91 was 88.1% The attendance rates for the two principals who were not offered new contracts during 1990-91 dropped significantly. The principal of School 2 attended none of the remaining council meetings after the LSC voted not to offer a new contract outright. Similarly, the principal in School 3 attended only three of the ten LSC meetings which occurred after the council opened its principal selection search.[5] Although principals' attendance at formal LSC meetings is no guarantee that they will provide necessary leadership to councils, it is certain that there is no opportunity for principals to provide needed insights to councils when they are absent.

The case of School 2 offers possible alternatives to the problems created when a principal takes leave after not be offered a contract. The LSC of this school first tried to find someone to serve as an interim or acting principal until school's end. Council members first approached the assistant principal, who held a Type 75 principal's certificate, asking her to serve as acting principal. After the assistant principal declined the offer, the LSC pursued candidates outside of the school to serve as interim principal. Not wanting to risk giving up their current positions with no guarantee of becoming the school's regular principal, each person contacted decided not to accept an interim position. Finally, the LSC selected a new principal, offering a four year contract contingent upon the person also serving through the end of the school year. This council's action offers three possible alternatives -- finding someone within the school to serve as acting principal, searching for someone outside of the school to serve as interim principal, and asking the newly selected principal to begin his or her term early -- to finding a principal to complete the academic year. Of course, these are only alternatives if the incumbent principal takes leave; however, in this situation, finding someone to serve as principal may at least ensure that certain tasks like budgeting and school improvement planning are completed. Another way to address this issue might be to change the deadlines for school improvement plans and budgeting so that these tasks are finished prior to council's conducting principal evaluation and selection.

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[5]In a later interview, the principal of School 3 noted that after his council decided not to offer him a contract outright or select him as a candidate, he was able to resume the primary role of instructional leader in the school. He stated, "I have probably visited more classrooms, and have talked to more kids, and have done more instructional leadership than I did...when I was faced with having to constantly come to council meetings, prepare for council meetings, work up the energy, work up the paperwork, work up the attitude, develop the strategies, call up people, and get them prepared so that they would speak."

One final issue from these cases is how an LSC's attention can be dominated by a single issue, like principal evaluation and selection, while other important areas are neglected. Schools 1, 2, and 3 met more often than the other schools in our sample. On average, we covered 13 meetings in all of our sample schools over the course of the 1990-91 school year. In Schools 1, 2, and 3, we covered 24, 19, and 21 meetings, respectively. The LSCs in these schools also discussed the most personnel topics at meetings of all our schools. In one school, the LSC spent the majority of its time and efforts during the school year on principal evaluation and selection processes and was unable to attend to the budget and the School Improvement Plan. Although the importance of selecting a strong leader cannot be overemphasized, the way in which the principal evaluation and selection processes affect the council's attending to other activities is an issue. If the principal evaluation and selection processes dominate a council's attention to the exclusion of completing other important tasks, new ways to help councils balance activities need to be found.

The LSCs in our Monitoring and Researching the Effects of School Reform in Chicago Study were all able to evaluate and make decisions concerning principal selection or to use the established mechanisms to have the district superintendent choose a principal. Although the LSCs in the three cases presented made some mistakes, these were not insurmountable and the local school councils were successful in conducting principal evaluation and selection in their schools. Likewise, the other councils in the fourteen schools participating in our monitoring and researching efforts also performed their principal evaluation and selection tasks. Although the ways that these 14 schools conducted principal evaluation and selection differed (the issue was handled with a simple vote of some councils and other LSCs developed more elaborate processes and criteria), all fourteen LSCs, completed evaluations and made principal decisions. With these tasks complete, principals, councils, and parents and community members can proceed with developing and implementing programs which will lead to school improvement and enhanced student learning.

III. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND INSTRUCTIONAL CHANGE

Susan P. Ryan
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Introduction

Public Act 85-1418, the Chicago School Reform Act, required that schools submit a detailed school improvement plan (SIP) outlining how they expect to achieve several major outcomes and goals. The legislation charges schools to improve test scores in math and reading on a nationally normed, standardized achievement test, improve attendance rates, reduce the number of elementary school students who are retained, and increase the high school graduation rate. The Act also lists other school goals in the areas of curriculum, school climate, student transition to employment, teacher professionalism, and parent and community involvement. Given these systemwide goals and expected outcomes, schools were mandated to develop and implement their own plans to improve school performance.

The local school councils adopted three-year SIPs in the spring of 1990. The School Reform Act states that the local school councils are responsible for monitoring the implementation of their plans. The plans from our sample of fourteen schools include a wide variety of initiatives, or statements about the actions school personnel plan to carry out to achieve the objectives of reform. We have described these in greater detail in a previous report.[6]

Here, we focus on the implementation of SIP initiatives. The first section of this paper discusses the influence teachers had on the development of the SIPs from our fourteen schools. In the second section, we examine those SIP initiatives that teachers and administrators implemented or began to implement during the school year 1990-91. We categorize the reform initiatives as pedagogical, curricular, organizational, or other, and provide examples of the implementation of each type. Two patterns characterize the implementation of these initiatives. Some initiatives take a long time to carry out and require a commitment of time and effort, whereas others are fully implemented with just acquiring the needed funding and adding new staff. We also distinguish whether or not initiatives affect the regular classroom teacher and may lead to instructional changes. We examine the contribution of SIPs and other school factors to instructional change in the last section of the paper.

In this analysis, we rely on the following data from our fourteen focus schools: their school improvement plans; interviews with their principals and Professional Personnel Advisory Committee (PPAC) chairpersons; and observations of their LSC meetings. We

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[6] See G.A. Hess, Jr. and J.Q. Easton. (1991). Who Makes What Decisions? *Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance.*

also refer to the citywide results from the survey of Chicago elementary school teachers, *Charting Reform: The Teachers' Turn.*[7]

Teachers and School Improvement Plan Development

The level of teacher participation in SIP development and revision varied across our sample of schools, from no teacher involvement to 100 percent. Three schools in our sample had an established pre-reform tradition of shared decision making. Teachers in these schools took charge of plan development and helped to set their schools' agendas through the SIPs. At the other schools, with little experience in shared decision making, two factors appear to have facilitated greater teacher involvement in plan development: training and organization. Teachers from one school attended training sessions on SIP development. The PPAC chair commented that the training had been "...a very good way to get us going and get us organized." Teachers at some other schools organized themselves effectively to work on their SIPs. They divided up the tasks, set aside blocks of time to work on the plans or the revisions, and then coordinated the pulling together of the final product. Teachers played an important role in SIP development and revision at some of the schools in our sample.

All teacher proposals for the SIP are subject to the consideration of both the principal and the LSC. The School Reform Act states: "The local school principal shall develop a school improvement plan in consultation with the local school council, all categories of school staff, parents and community residents." Thus, the principal is primarily responsible for developing the SIP, and the LSC must approve it. Some teachers feared that principals would include little of the teachers' input in the final version of the school's plan. In all but one or two of our fourteen schools, this was not the case. As the following comments from the PPAC chairs illustrate, principals and LSCs usually respected teacher contributions to the SIP:

> Last year, they [the LSC] took our document and just about adopted the whole thing as the SIP.
>
> The LSC has accepted all suggestions except for the security issue.
>
> They did, surprisingly....After our retreat we did the fine tuning of it and it was printed up afterwards and approved by the LSC.
>
> I don't know of anything they didn't approve....
>
> None of our suggestions were ever turned down [but]...we had a contingency plan, if enough money comes up. It's for an additional guidance counselor.
>
> I did attend the last LSC meeting, and they accepted everything.

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[7] See J.Q. Easton, A.S. Bryk, M.E. Driscoll, J.G. Kotsakis, P.A. Sebring, and A.J. van der Ploeg. (1991). *Charting Reform: The Teachers' Turn*, October 1991 issue of *Catalyst*. This survey was sponsored by the Consortium on Chicago School Research; the Chicago Panel participated in this project.

Although the reform legislation assigns the PPAC an advisory, rather than a governing role, at most of the focus schools, teachers have not been denied a voice in their SIPs.

Research has demonstrated that teacher involvement in the planning process is important for successful program implementation[8]. One educational researcher notes:

> One of the most important components of a successful school-based program is that teachers must have a central role in the development of the program....The failure to involve teachers in the planning and development of programs has led to the failure of many innovative programs."[9]

Consequently, those schools with greater teacher participation in the development and revision of the plans are likely to have greater teacher support for the implementation of SIP reforms. Fifty-three percent of about 13,000 Chicago elementary teachers who responded to the teachers' survey agreed with the statement, "I helped develop the SIP for my school" (*Charting Reform: The Teachers' Turn*, page 5). According to the literature in the implementation field, then, the Chicago teachers' responses provide some justification for cautious optimism about their role in carrying out SIP initiatives, especially in the areas of curriculum and instruction.

Implementation of School Improvement Plan Initiatives

The fourteen plans from the focus schools contain widely diverse reform initiatives. We have classified these initiatives as **pedagogical** (dealing with teaching); **curricular** (pertaining to subject-matter content); **organizational** (specifying some reorganization of classes, grades, or the entire school); or **other** (such as parent and community involvement programs and attendance incentives). The first three categories roughly locate initiatives according to their anticipated effects. They are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, we hope that school personnel implement an organizational initiative, for example, so that it does have an impact on both curriculum and instruction, as well as on school organization. The table below presents a selection of SIP initiatives from the fourteen schools categorized by this schema.

School improvement plan initiatives are of little value if they are not implemented. We asked principals and key teachers, usually PPAC chairpersons, at the fourteen schools about the progress made towards implementing SIP initiatives--both those initiatives that

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[8] See McLaughlin and Marsh. (1978). Staff Development and School Change. *Teachers College Record, 80(1)*, 69-94. See also Doyle and Ponder. (1977) The Ethic of Practicality: Implications for Curriculum Development. *Curriculum Theory*, A. Molnar and J.A. Zahorik, eds., Washington, D.C.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 74-80.

[9] Waxman, H.C. (1985). Research on School-Based Improvement Programs: Its Implications for Curriculum Implementation. *Education, 105(3)*, 318-22.

they elected to discuss and those we judged to be the most prominent in their plans.[10] This section, organized by type of initiative, recounts some of their descriptions of more successful, less successful, and on-going implementation. We close the section with our conclusions about implementing SIP initiatives.

Types of School Improvement Plan Initiatives			
Pedagogical	Curricular	Organizational	Other
Writing Across the Curriculum	Jr. Great Books	smaller class size	parent and community involvement
team teaching	Windows on Science	walking reading	attendance programs
whole language	new text books	school within a school organization	discipline programs
hands-on approaches	Afro-centric curriculum	after-school tutoring	building improvements
cooperative learning	student self esteem curricular programs		
	curricular labs		
	enrichment programs		
	pre-kindergarten programs		
	full-day kindergarten		

Pedagogical Initiatives

Pedagogical initiatives speak to the teacher's "teaching"; they tend to place emphasis on how something is taught. Some examples of pedagogical initiatives are whole language programs in language arts, cooperative learning, team teaching, and writing across the curriculum. Upon implementation, pedagogical initiatives should result in changes in the teachers' classroom practices.

The fourteen SIPs list considerably fewer pedagogical initiatives than those in the "curricular" or "other" categories. Eight SIPs include pedagogical initiatives, and the principals or key teachers at six of the schools report that they are making progress on implementing those initiatives.[11] Most pedagogical initiatives apply only to teachers in certain grades or departments, but a few plan for schoolwide changes. Most schoolwide pedagogical initiatives have not yet been fully implemented.

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[10] This implementation review was a relatively informal process--not a strict audit of the implementation status of all components of the SIPs.

[11] With one exception, high school personnel did not mention instructional changes during their interviews. They may not have been informed about the implementation of departmentalized instructional initiatives.

The school personnel interviewed suggest that only those teachers who are motivated to improve their own instructional practices push themselves to do so. In particular, the outcomes of team-teaching, peer-tutoring, and cooperative-learning initiatives in our sample of schools seem to depend on individual teachers who are willing to try out new pedagogical practices. One PPAC chair said:

> ...some people are willing to change and other people are older and have lived successfully and feel that what they're doing has value, so don't feel the need to change. Those are the people you have to make into believers.

As the PPAC chair suggests, schoolwide implementation of a pedagogical initiative occurs only when all the teachers are "believers," i.e., they commit themselves to learn, employ, and adapt the new approach to teaching called for in the initiative.

One high school SIP included a schoolwide initiative on writing across the curriculum. After receiving a $10,000 grant from the Joyce Foundation, the principal coordinated an extensive staff development program on this topic. Outside consultants advised the English teachers on how to teach and stimulate writing in diverse subjects. The English teachers, in turn, instructed the staff from other departments. As a result of this year-long project, the quantity of student writing increased across subjects. The principal questions the continuation of this program, however. No funding remains for more staff development, or for monitoring and evaluating the program.

> The funding is gone and the project is completed, but are we going to continue? I mean, is the social studies department going to go back to... (where) they were two years ago, or is there really still going to be an emphasis on writing. I don't think you can just assume it's going to happen. That is going to require continued monitoring...

One elementary school's experience with Socratic seminars in the seventh and eighth grades provide a second example of the longitudinal nature of implementing instructional change. The goal of the seminars is to develop students' analytic thinking skills by increasing the complexity of classroom discussion. The Socratic format requires extensive staff development for effective implementation. Teachers learn questioning skills that pique students' interest and curiosity in diverse topics. They must know the material well and be able to engage all students in discussion.[12] In the seminars, teachers encourage students to reflect and share their insights as they explore issues in depth.

After two semesters of conducting the Socratic seminars, the teachers at this elementary school met with the principal to evaluate the program. They taped and reviewed some of the seminars because teachers and students were not yet satisfied with them. The principal proposed that she interview students on videotape for the teachers. She then asked teachers to critique the set of tapes at home. After this, the staff met to discuss and revise the seminar format. They decided to divide students into smaller groups so that the

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[12] See *Introducing the Socratic Seminar into the Elementary School Classroom: A Resource Book for Teachers and Administrators*. (1991). Chicago Board of Education.

students would have more speaking opportunities. The principal and teachers attributed part of the eighth graders' significant gains in the language arts section of the IGAP (Illinois Goals Assessment Program) to the Socratic seminars, and so they have decided to try out this approach in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades, too.

The principals and teachers describe the implementation of new ways of teaching as a lengthy and, at times, difficult process. Teachers must believe, and convince their colleagues, that changing their current practices is worth the necessary commitment of time and effort. They have to participate in staff development programs and then incorporate the new strategies into their teaching. They must mutually support each other's continuing experimentation with the new strategies, while adapting them to meet school policies, requirements, and the needs of their students. Principals and PPAC chairs at our sample of schools discuss the implementation of a pedagogical initiative as an on-going endeavor.

Curricular Initiatives

Curricular initiatives deal with changes in <u>what</u> is taught. Adopting new textbooks, adding an art class to the schedule, or setting up a new science lab are examples of curricular initiatives from the fourteen schools. Some curricular initiatives affect instruction as well as the curriculum. Curricular initiatives make up the largest category of initiatives in the fourteen plans.

PPAC chairs at two elementary schools in our sample have described the continuing implementation of their literature-based reading and language arts initiatives. Teachers at the first school have set aside the basal readers in favor of books like *The Pearl* and *The Red Pony*. After a ten-week staff development program on writing, most of the teachers have also adopted an emphasis on writing through student journals and/or writing portfolios. The teachers at this school say that their instructional practices have also changed considerably because of these departures from the traditional language arts curriculum. At the second school, teachers are taking longer to implement their new language arts program. The SIP initiative calls for the reading committee to review and select new readers for the upper grades. The committee spent several months examining possible texts and eventually decided to change to literature-based readers. Teachers then attended staff development meetings about the differences the new readers could introduce into their classes. The teachers at the second school planned to switch to the new readers in the fall of 1991. At both schools, the implementation of new language arts programs has been gradual, dependent on teacher efforts, and characterized by refinements to the original programs launched by the SIP initiatives.

At a third school, school personnel have not yet implemented a curricular initiative. Teachers planned to incorporate an Afro-centric component into the reading/language arts and social studies curricula. They received some materials and attended a workshop on the program, but the PPAC chair indicated that none of the faculty has yet redesigned the content of the classes. The teachers need further staff development before they can proceed

with the curricular changes. A disagreement as to who is responsible for planning the next stages of implementation has delayed the realization of this initiative.

Perhaps the most striking curricular initiatives, especially in terms of the money invested, are those that led to the creation and expansion of computer laboratories. One high school spent approximately $400,000 of its discretionary funds to purchase a comprehensive learning (computer) laboratory to supplement all curricular areas. Another school has equipped almost every classroom with a networked computer mini-lab so that students can begin and continue their work in any classroom. The school is also installing data bases from the National Geographic Society and the Chicago Public Library to facilitate student research. In general, funding and new staff are the key elements in the successful implementation of these curricular programs.

We have discovered two patterns in the implementation of curricular initiatives. The first curricular illustrations--implementing new literature-based reading/language arts programs at two schools and adding an Afro-centric component to certain classes at a third school--require a commitment of teachers' time and effort. The pattern of implementation is incremental; it proceeds from conceptualization to the classrooms via staff development, a great deal of teacher planning, and instructional trial and error. In this respect, the implementation of these sorts of curricular initiatives closely resembles that of the pedagogical initiatives, and contrasts sharply with the implementation of the computer labs. By and large, computer labs fall into place simply with sufficient funding and new staff. Other curricular initiatives that follow the second pattern of implementation include new science labs, full-day kindergartens, and pre-kindergarten classes. In addition, some elementary schools have recently expanded their curricular programs with art and music classes that have also been readily implemented through extra funding and the hiring of specialists.

What accounts for the two patterns of implementation? Clearly the demands that the programs make upon the regular classroom teacher affect the pattern of implementation. A change in the core curriculum places the burden of implementation on the classroom teachers, whereas setting up a new computer lab, adding a music class, or starting a pre-kindergarten program does not depend on them. The first pattern of implementation requires extensive staff development, teacher planning, and teacher commitment; the second requires new staff or specialists. We refer to the second set of curricular initiatives as "add-on programs" because their curricular impact tends to lie outside the regular classroom. The following table illustrates this distinction. Our interviews with school personnel indicate that the curricular add-on programs are more likely to be implemented than any other type of initiative.

At the schools in our sample, the only impediments to implementing curricular add-on programs are logistical problems. At one school, for example, the science lab did not get its furniture until several months into the school year. At another, the unforeseen lack of classrooms prevented the staff from adding the two full-day kindergartens planned in the SIP. The initiative had been contingent on the school receiving additional funds for mobile

units--a contingency that did not occur. With the exception of logistical difficulties such as these, school personnel have readily implemented curricular add-on initiatives.

Likelihood of School Improvement Plan Initiatives Affecting Classroom Practices				
	Pedagogical	Curricular	Organizational	Other
Initiatives That May Affect Regular Classroom Teachers	Writing Across the Curriculum team teaching whole language hands-on approaches cooperative learning	Jr. Great Books Windows on Science new text books African-centered curriculum student self esteem curricular programs	smaller class size walking reading school within a school organization	
Initiatives That Are Unlikely to Affect Classroom Teachers (Add-on Programs)		curricular labs enrichment programs pre-kindergarten programs full-day kindergarten	after-school tutoring	parent and community involvement attendance programs discipline programs building improvements

Organizational Initiatives

Organizational initiatives make up the category with the fewest SIP initiatives. They call for the restructuring of the school's physical, social, and instructional spaces. Organizational initiatives implemented before or after the school day are usually add-on programs; they have very little chance of affecting the classroom teacher. For instance, after-school tutoring through which students receive individualized or small-group instruction is an add-on initiative that may improve student performance. In contrast, organizational initiatives implemented during the school day usually do affect classroom teachers and, when completely implemented, they may facilitate instructional improvements. The most common organizational initiative in the fourteen SIPs is to reduce class size by allotting teachers, students, and classrooms in new ways. Other organizational initiatives include developing walking reading programs in which students with similar reading abilities who are in different grades or different rooms come together in one classroom for reading instruction, and establishing "a school within a school," which reorganizes faculty and/or classrooms to concentrate services or to build "closeness" across certain grades or departments. To reduce class size, institute a walking reading program, or form a "school within a school" requires the cooperation of the classroom teachers. Moreover, when classroom teachers take advantage of their new organizational settings, the implementation of these initiatives can have positive effects on their classroom practices.

Creating a "school within a school" is an initiative in three SIPs. The rationale for forming smaller units within large schools is that smaller schools have many desirable properties difficult to achieve in large schools. For instance, *Charting Reform: The Teachers' Turn* indicates that teachers at small schools are more positive about school governance, school reform and the quality of their schools than teachers at medium and large schools. Two schools have already implemented their "school within a school" programs. One middle school is now physically divided into three houses of approximately 240 students each. Each house has its own lunch room, and students leave their "house" only for swimming and gym. The second school has separated the primary, intermediate, and upper grades in some symbolic ways, such as holding separate graduation ceremonies for each level. In neither case has the reorganization had much impact on the classroom practices of teachers to date, but it lays a foundation for future changes. It will be important to see if separate "house faculties" institute different pedagogical or curricular efforts.

An initiative or goal included in eight SIPs is to reduce class size in the school. At least three schools have successfully carried out this initiative by hiring additional staff, adjusting schedules so that reading is taught throughout the day, and using specialized staff in the regular classroom. One school has successfully reduced the number of students in all of its reading and math classes from thirty or more to just sixteen or seventeen. A teacher at that school acknowledges, however, that reduce class size does not in itself improve the instruction students receive:

> They've got the sixteen (students) in front of them, that's fine, but there were other things that were supposed to happen to help the teaching process so that you could take advantage of the low class size. Low class size alone means nothing.

This teacher questions the rationale of using resources to reduce class size if teachers do not change their instructional practices to take advantage of the smaller classes. As with the "school within a school" programs, reducing class size does affect classroom teachers, but it has not yet influenced their ways of teaching.

The SIPs from our sample of schools frequently included after-school tutoring as an add-on organizational initiative. These are extended-day programs and are unlikely to have any direct impact on regular classrooms. Ten SIPs called for after-school tutoring to assist students in the core content areas such as reading, writing, math, and science. Tutoring programs are a means of providing students with more individualized instruction than is possible in the regular classroom. The programs are easily implemented with funding and either new staff, or with teachers willing to work additional hours after school.

Other Initiatives

The "other initiatives" category has several major components: parent and community involvement; counseling and discipline; and attendance. Some examples of other initiatives include a program to train parents to assist in the classroom, an "adopt-a-student" program in which core staff "adopt" or pay special attention to students from a designated class for

a month, and the building of partnerships between the school and outside agencies like a local business or the Art Institute of Chicago. These initiatives are plans for add-on school programs most of which do not affect the regular classroom teacher.

School personnel have tended to implement two sorts of initiatives that relate to the non-academic needs of students--discipline and attendance programs. At three schools, the staff has carried out discipline initiatives such as setting up an in-house suspension program or a time-out room for misbehaving students. At other schools they have implemented attendance initiatives that offer incentives to individuals or to entire classes for good attendance. Like the curricular add-ons, discipline and attendance programs are relatively easy to implement and monitor. Principals usually hire one or two additional staff members to supervise, teach, or counsel students, to organize incentives, and to handle paperwork. Gauging the implementation and the outcomes of these programs is also quite straightforward. When we asked about one school's attendance program, the principal quickly pointed out that attendance had risen two percent from the previous year!

The discipline and attendance programs illustrate a pattern of implementation typical of add-on initiatives, Their implementation usually depends on funding and new staff members, and they make relatively small demands on current school personnel. Some "other" initiatives, however, require a high level of commitment and energy; they follow the pattern of implementation typical of pedagogical initiatives. The critical element in the implementation of initiatives like parent and community involvement programs, staff mentoring programs, and one school's student-run advocacy office, is the considerable commitment of time and labor from at least some of the administration, staff, parents, and/or students. For instance, the effectiveness of parent involvement programs varies across the fourteen schools, and the implementation of a program in this area appears to depend entirely on both the dedication of the parents, and of the principal or some other staff member. It is important to recognize this distinction among the add-on initiatives.

Relationship between implementation patterns and types of SIP initiatives

	Pattern 1: Require significant commitment and time	Pattern 2: Require $ and new staff, but not widespread commitment
Initiatives likely to lead to instructional change	writing across curriculum team teaching whole language approach cooperative learning	none
Add-on programs	student conflict resolution some parent involvement	full-day kindergarten after-school tutoring pre-school programs computer labs attendance improvement

This examination of self-reported of implementation efforts has shown us that the initiatives that affect the regular classroom teacher, and so may lead to instructional changes, all require a commitment of time and effort to carry out (see table). Seven of the fourteen SIPs include initiatives for instructional changes, and staff at six of these schools report that they are making progress on implementing those initiatives. We have also learned that

school personnel can implement most add-on initiatives simply by using new funding and hiring new staff. A few add-ons, however, such as the student-run advocacy office for conflict resolution at one school and parent involvement programs at others, follow the more demanding pattern of implementation. The table illustrates this distinction among the add-on initiatives.

Conclusions about Implementing School Improvement Plan Initiatives

We have found two patterns of SIP implementation: 1) some initiatives require significant commitment of time and effort to be implemented successfully; and 2) other initiatives depend mostly on funding and new staff. Initiatives that require the participation of faculty, administrators, parents, and/or students take longer to implement and are constantly at risk from "non-believers" among the staff, from disillusionment, and from the possibility of ebbing commitment on the part of those already involved. Initiatives that basically require added funding and staffing tend to be implemented quickly and they are easily sustained by continued funding. Initiatives that more significantly affect the regular classroom teacher follow the first pattern of implementation, whereas most add-on programs adhere to the second. Because of the commitment required, however, add-on programs such as increasing parent and community involvement also tend to follow the first pattern.

We have also found that the SIP initiatives can be characterized as either programs primarily affecting the regular classroom teacher or add-on programs (those not directly affecting the classroom teacher). We uncovered this distinction by examining the differing patterns of implementation; a pedagogical, curricular, or organizational program that has an effect on the regular classroom teacher follows the lengthier pattern of implementation, whereas funding and more staff are generally sufficient to put most add-on programs into operation. The two sorts of initiatives are not, however, equivalent to the two patterns for implementing initiatives. Successful parent involvement programs, for example, generally take a long time and a great deal of effort to implement. Despite this, they are add-on initiatives because they are unlikely to directly affect teachers' activities and practices in the regular classroom.

One consistent overlap between the patterns of implementation and the types of initiatives does occur, however. The initiatives that directly affect regular classroom teachers always follow the lengthier and more demanding pattern of implementation. Programs designed to change teaching methods, the core curriculum, or the organizational design of the school do not fall into place with just funding and new staff. Each of these initiatives is, to some degree, a mini-plan that can bring about instructional changes when fully implemented. The implementation of an initiative to reduce class size can be more than an end in itself; it has the potential to affect the regular teacher's classroom practices. Similarly, a new literature-based language arts program can influence <u>how</u>, as well as <u>what</u>, the teacher teaches. To achieve their potential, these initiatives require staff development, teacher planning, and classroom fine-tuning. Our schools provide numerous examples, such as the stalled implementation of the Afro-centric curriculum in one elementary school, in

which the potential changes these initiatives promise have not yet been realized. Yet because of their potential to change instruction, the initiatives that most affect the regular classroom teachers cannot be implemented solely with funding and more staff.

Instructional changes in general are not easily implemented because of the time commitment required from teachers. The process of implementation from initiatives to actual changes in classrooms often takes more than a year. One principal noted that her faculty is now into its fourth year of working with the Erickson Institute to develop, carry out, and refine a whole language program. In fact, the SIP is a three-year plan, and some schools have approached change methodically over a two- to three-year period. A three-year schedule for implementation of an initiative provides sufficient time for teachers to meet and discuss student needs, plan for program changes, garner staff support, select and purchase materials and equipment, pilot the program if necessary, implement and adapt it to each classroom. Consequently, the implementation of initiatives that have an impact on instruction is on-going in our focus schools.

Not only does the process of bringing about instructional change take time, it also requires dedication and work. PPAC chairpersons note that a large percentage of teachers at a school--preferably all of them--must adopt a new philosophy or approach in order for it to translate into tangible changes at the classroom level. Research in the field tends to confirm this notion.[13] Committed teachers attend staff development programs and then alter their practices; most others do not. Short-term workshops are usually insufficient for the implementation of instructional changes. The focus school in this study undergoing the most significant instructional change has had staff development programs in science, reading, and writing. Teachers at this school concentrate on one content area each year for intensive staff development. Even though individual teachers may adjust their instructional practices without them, long term staff development programs seem to be essential for schoolwide instructional change.

One complication in assessing an SIP initiative's instructional impact lies with the great variety of professional educational experiences that are labelled "staff development." Many initiatives indicate that school personnel will receive some type of inservice or workshop, usually in conjunction with a new program. The depth, length, and effectiveness of such staff development varies widely, however. We see a wide range of professional education from short-term "workshops" to longer-term "staff development programs." One PPAC chairperson described the short-term workshops that teachers at her school attended this year:

> We've had two sessions. The first was a 30-minute session on the basal reading program. That was in September... we had two 90-minute workshops on the whole language program.

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[13] See Waxman (1985), "Research on School-based Improvement Programs: Its Implication for Curriculum Implementation," *Education, 105(3)*, 318-21.

In contrast, the majority of teachers at another school attended a staff development program conducted by the Illinois Writing Project for three hours every Wednesday afternoon for ten weeks. A ten-week staff development program for an initiative--whether pedagogical, curricular, or organizational--is much more likely to promote instructional change than two 90-minute workshops. The nature of an initiative's staff development component, then, can directly affect its instructional potential.

Not only are instructional changes more difficult to implement, they are also more difficult to monitor than most add-on programs. Our data about implementation consists of the perceptions of staff members. Additional information from classroom observations is needed to provide a more complete picture of the implementation status of a pedagogical initiative. Our current data indicate that instructional change is not occurring in most classrooms. Although this finding is preliminary, it is corroborated by *Charting Reform: The Teachers' Turn*, in which the majority of elementary teachers said that their instructional practices had not changed as a result of school reform and will not change as a result of the SIP. Implementing a pedagogical, curricular, or organizational initiative so that it fulfills its instructional potential demands teachers' time and efforts. Changing instruction is difficult to do, difficult to monitor, and difficult to evaluate.

In contrast to instructional change initiatives, most add-on initiatives are relatively easy to implement and monitor. Add-on programs usually directly affect only a few teachers--just new staff hired specifically for the program. Efforts to gain widespread teacher support for implementation are generally unnecessary. Once the add-on program is funded, it is the responsibility of the principal (or of a designated person) to carry out administrative tasks necessary for implementation. Because it often has its own physical space, equipment, and/or staff, the add-on program is generally easier to monitor and evaluate than initiatives affecting classroom teachers. Implementation is complete when the program is in place and in operation.

Both add-on initiatives and the initiatives that affect classroom teachers may lead to school improvement in our focus schools. After the first year of SIP implementation, many add-on programs are in place. Fewer of the pedagogical, curricular, and organizational initiatives with the potential to bring about instructional changes have yet been fully implemented. Because changing teachers' practices is a complex task, it is not surprising that the implementation of such initiatives proceeds more slowly.

Discussion and Conclusions: What Contributes to Instructional Change?

As this analysis of reform initiatives and their implementation in fourteen schools shows, relatively few initiatives have yet prompted regular classroom teachers to change their teaching. In addition, the implementation of such initiatives is usually slower and more difficult than the implementation of add-on initiatives. Indeed, only half of the schools in our sample place any emphasis on instructional change in the first place, and it is central to the SIP in just four cases. Thus, the writing of a school improvement plan is no

guarantee that the practices of the classroom teacher will change. The responses elementary teachers throughout the city made to *Charting Reform: The Teachers' Turn* indicate that teachers recognize this as well:

> ...more than one-half of the teachers said that reform had not had an effect on their classroom practices. Further, fewer than one-half said that their instructional practices will change as a result of the School Improvement Plan. These results are interesting when compared with teachers' reports about improvements in their schools. Two-thirds of the teachers believe that the SIP will help to make their school better, yet only 45 percent see the SIP as changing their instructional practices. Apparently a substantial number of teachers expect improvement to occur externally rather than through a change in their own classroom practices. (page 11)

Instructional change is a possible, but relatively infrequent and hard-won, outcome of school improvement planning.

At the same time, it would be a mistake to conclude that SIPs make no contribution to improving instruction. They can act as a blueprint for directed change; they have certainly served that purpose in some of the focus schools. To write an SIP requires setting and prioritizing goals and specifying means for realizing them. SIPs detail which changes school personnel intend to make, and how they plan to make them--especially for pedagogical and curricular initiatives. SIP initiatives can promote greater instructional change when they call for staff development programs. Effective staff development not only introduces teachers to new instructional ideas, it also helps to extend the climate of expectation for change throughout the school and to strengthen the confidence of teachers as they undertake change. Therefore the effective implementation of the pedagogical, curricular, and organizational initiatives in an SIP encourages all the teachers at a school to improve their teaching and suggests how they should go about it. In addition, SIPs have provisions for monitoring the implementation of initiatives. By establishing staff responsibilities, timelines, and indicators of satisfactory implementation, SIPs can also set the pace of change and establish the measures of success. Clearly a school improvement plan can facilitate instructional changes when teachers at a school are open to change.

From our data we have identified four other factors that affect the instructional practices of the regular classroom teachers in some schools. First, one principal believes that the smaller size of her faculty fosters instructional change. Her staff numbers between twenty and thirty people, and they work together cohesively. At a larger school, she explained, "...it gets too difficult to manage. You don't have time to sit down and allow everybody to talk and really say what they want." Teachers at this school share instructional ideas and create a supportive environment for trying them out. The smaller school size encourages collegiality and innovation with classroom practices.

Second, principals who take responsibility for instructional leadership can persuade teachers to experiment with new approaches to teaching and provide support when they do. Principals address this issue individually through teacher evaluation and supervision. Perhaps more importantly, however, they are able to help direct schoolwide instructional

reform by taking the lead on staff development programs. One principal discusses her efforts to promote professional development at her school:

> We're proud of people who achieve here and you (the teachers at this school) are going to achieve, too....At 2:30, you are finished and at 3:00, you go into staff development. And, people are signing up for it! Twenty people took the writing (staff development program), and I got twelve people to take mathematics, and hopefully I'm going to get my whole staff (to take the mathematics program). I was gentle at first, but I'm going to be stronger now!

Principals like this one can act as a catalyst for instructional change in their schools.

Funding is the third factor we have identified as facilitating the implementation of instructional change. Although our analysis has borne out that instructional change requires much more than just resources, it usually requires resources as well. Funding is needed to provide staff development programs, compensate teachers for the time they spend on instructional improvement, and purchase classroom materials and equipment appropriate to the new teaching methods. In these ways, funding serves as an element in improving instructional practices.

Finally, we find that a certain philosophy or "ethos" where teachers and students share responsibility for student learning pervades the schools where teachers are making schoolwide instructional changes. We define this ethos as having two component beliefs: 1) that teachers have primary responsibility for academic learning--an attitude whereby teachers believe that their own instructional practices are critical; and 2) that students must also be actively involved in their own learning. The following excerpts from the SIP and a grant application of one of our focus schools exemplify its statement of this philosophy:

> "...we need teachers who must have the vision and guts to buck the system and become actively engaged in the education of their children. Educators are the child's second most influential teachers. The responsibility for the academic training belongs primarily to the educators." (SIP)

> "In our plan for student development we have concentrated on...our students' involvement in the development, implementation, and evaluation of the curriculum....We are counting on our students to assume responsibility along with ownership of and involvement in the instruction program." (Grant application)

We do not know whether this philosophy actually precipitates instructional changes or results from them. We suspect that both may be true--that this ethos interacts with a faculty's willingness to improve teaching. The SIPs and the interviews with school personnel suggest that these beliefs have some bearing on schoolwide commitments to instructional innovation.

Four of the schools in our sample articulated this ethos in their school improvement plans, but just three have been successfully implementing schoolwide instructional changes. Only a relatively small group of teachers at the fourth school attend instructional staff development. The staff interviewed at the three schools undergoing the more extensive changes commented on the schoolwide beliefs about student learning. At the fourth school,

though, the principal distinguished those teachers who are "religious" about their responsibility for improving student learning from the rest of the staff. Although only further study will uncover the precise nature of the relationship, we believe that an acceptance of the joint teacher-student responsibility for students' learning plays an important part in the schoolwide implementation of change in teachers' practices.

One of the schools that is making extensive instructional changes--many of which are schoolwide--exemplifies almost all of these factors. It is not a small school, but it does have: 1) a clear and innovative SIP dedicated to improving the classroom practices of all the teachers at the school; 2) a principal who provides the school with strong instructional leadership; 3) resources earmarked for staff development programs and for classroom materials and equipment for the new programs; and 4) a pervasive ethos that teachers and students share the responsibility for student learning. Examples of the instructional changes this school is implementing include Socratic seminars, a literature-based reading program, extensive use of hands-on learning in mathematics, an experimental approach to science, and an innovative writing program. All of these instructional changes were preceded by extensive staff development programs that the majority of the teachers attended. Teachers in the writing program, for example, have completed a thirty hour staff development program and are now using a variety of techniques to stimulate more student writing. One innovative writing activity involves composing and revising a group story by students and their teacher. The students offer their ideas about the story as the teacher writes and edits it on the computer. Other activities, such as report writing for social studies and journal writing, are more individually based. In addition to their classroom writing, all students and their classroom teacher attend a writing lab twice a week. The school also invited parents to attend the staff development program for this schoolwide writing initiative. A school committee wrote a grant to compensate twenty-five parents for their "classes" in the computer lab to learn keyboard skills and how to use the reading software. The parents, teachers, and principal at this school work together to further student learning and, in particular, the teachers have made a commitment to many instructional changes.

We have not included staff development in this final discussion; rather we have examined those school attributes that drive the planning of, attendance at, and acceptance of staff development programs. Here, however, we wish to underscore explicitly the importance of staff development to changing teachers' instructional practices. As one SIP states, "Staff development is the key to the improvement of the instructional program."

This paper has dealt with the implementation of the SIP initiatives in 14 focus schools. We found that many initiatives are being implemented and adapted to improve student learning. The implementation of some initiatives is a process requiring a commitment of time and effort from the school staff, parents, and students. Administrators readily implement other initiatives by securing funding for them and hiring new staff. The implementation of initiatives that affect the regular classroom teachers follow the incremental and developmental pattern; they require teachers to plan and attend staff development, modify their lessons, try out new methods, and then adjust their pedagogical

and curricular innovations to meet their students' needs. These are the steps in carrying out instructional changes.

We have identified several factors that are facilitating the implementation of instructional changes in some of the focus schools. Smaller school size, principals who take on the role of strong instructional leaders, funding for staff development, and an ethos of shared teacher-student responsibility for student learning are associated with the degree to which schools are committed to carrying out initiatives that affect teaching practices. We expect these instructional innovations in the regular classroom will play a pivotal role in the achievement of the goals of Chicago school reform.

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